El Parque de mi Barrio:
Production and Consumption of Open Spaces in Popular Settlements in Bogotá

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Abstract

This research aims to contribute to the debate on informal or popular settlements by viewing them as an opportunity to understand different ways of seeing and thinking about the city. Open spaces in popular settlements, like the housing stock, are to a large extent the product of local self-help and self-managed processes, however, the equivalent level of understanding has not been achieved, partly because they are often seen as spare spaces with little value. Open spaces in popular settlements are public in terms of ownership and accessibility, but are communal in terms of use and attachment. They play an important role in the physical and social dynamics of the *barrios* since their inception, however the improvement and consolidation of such spaces may not be realised for many years.

The aim of this research is to investigate open spaces in the *barrios*, exploring ideas of production of informal urban space, functional and symbolic consumption, and the language and meaning that these places may convey. The research examines the subject in Bogotá, focusing on three questions: 1) How is open space designed, built, managed, transformed and sustained? 2) What is the relationship between open spaces and the people (users) who create them? 3) What is the form and design language used and how can it be understood and interpreted?

The research draws on empirical data from 57 case studies of open space in the *barrios* of Bogotá collected between 2003 and 2007. Six cases were selected to explore in greater depth during further fieldwork. A qualitative methodology was employed, with a case study approach and a multi-method strategy: semi–structured interviews, observation, mapping, photography, photo elicitation and documentary sources. Based on the general and specific cases, the thesis contributes to an understanding of popular settlements as a way of thinking and developing cities in Latin America, and open spaces as tools of urban and social consolidation. The thesis concludes that open spaces are not 'additional' areas in the settlements; on the contrary, they are fundamental and hold functional and symbolic uses from the early stages. It also argues that the processes of production and consumption of open spaces are closely interrelated, and help explain the design language found in the *barrios*, as well as contribute to build meanings for individuals and communities.

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Having the opportunity to do the doctorate was a professional, family and personal experience. In this sense, it could not have been accomplished without the participation of a large number of people who over the years gave me their support, sympathy and solidarity. Firstly, my principal supervisor, Dr Peter Kellett, a person with the highest academic and personal qualities. He was always ready to discuss and confront my ideas; but also to offer guidance, support and advice on arguably any theme and concern. I am also in debt with my second supervisor, Dr Graham Tipple, who revised my work several times and made important suggestions. In the University of Newcastle, and in particular in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape (SAPL), many contributed directly and indirectly with comments, ideas and recommendations. The SAPL seminars were especially important, in which I had the chance to present and discuss my work and receive feedback from lecturers and colleagues; and the 'Dr Kellett's seminars' in which PhD students supervised by him discuss and debate our work. This not only proved to be useful and encouraging, but also gave us the chance to build our friendships which I have no doubt will last.

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I wish to dedicate this work to my wife and daughter Celia and Laura Valentina with all my love. Also to my parents and sister, Hector Esperanza and Iliana.

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Acronyms Used in the Text

DAACD	Departamento Administrativo de Acción Comunal Distrital *Municipal Administrative Department of Communal Action*
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística *National Administrative Department of Statistics*
DAPD	Departamento Administrativo de Planeación Distrital *Municipal Administrative Department of Planning*
DNP	Departamento Nacional de Planeación *National Department of Planning*
HIC	Hábitat Internacional Coalición *Habitat International Coalition*
ICBF	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar *Colombian Family Welfare Institute*
IDIPRON	Instituto para la Protección de la Niñez y la Juventud *Protection of the Childhood and the Youth Institute*
IDPAC	Instituto Distrital de Participación y Acción Comunal *Municipal Participation and Communal Action Institute*
IDRD	Instituto Distrital para la Recreación y el Deporte *Municipal Recreation and Sports Institute*
IDU	Instituto de Desarrollo Urbano *Urban Development Institute*
INURBE	Instituto Nacional de Vivienda y Reforma Urbana *National Insitute for Housing and Urban Reform*
JAC	Junta de Acción Comunal *Communal Action Group*
OPC	Obras con Participación Ciudadana *Works with Citizens' Participation*
OSP	Obras con Saldo Pedagógico *Works with an Educational Outcome*
PMIB	Programa de Mejoramiento Integral de Barrios *Integral Barrios Upgrading Programme*

POT	Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial *Territorial Planning and Land Use Plan*
PSH	Producción Social del Hábitat *Social Production of Habitat*
SCA	Sociedad Colombia de Arquitectos *Colombian Architects Asociation*

We moved to Aguas Claras in 1992. I still remember the day; it was the 18th of April, a rainy day. The car that we had hired to bring our things could not reach the barrio, because the track was unpaved and rough and it could be stuck. My mum and I had to walk nearly a kilometre, in the rain and pulling our things up the mountain. It was a difficult arrival, and on the top of that, we felt miserable and sad; we had left our previous barrio in the other end of the city to be in this almost deserted land. The only good thing was that we were arriving to our own piece of land. There were few houses, but most of the streets were clearly established. Our plot was marked out but was full of bushes; it was hard to clear it and start making our first home. We did not know where the park was, but we knew it was somewhere.

Rocio (*Barrio* Aguas Claras)

1.1 Popular or (Extra)ordinary Settlements?

This research is about popular settlements in Bogotá. It is an enquiry into open spaces: what they are, how they work, and what they mean to people. My interest in the subject is both professional and personal, but is also linked to the urban and social realities of Colombian cities. I became aware of popular settlements well after I had finished my architecture studies in Bogotá, despite the fact that for a long time these settlements have constituted more than half of the city. During my undergraduate architecture studies there were a few workshops on the subject, but for most of us it was a 'marginal' topic, not so interesting compared with projects addressing the 'formal' minority city. This perception by architecture students and schools has not changed much, irrespective of the size and the social and urban complexity of popular settlements. In my case, gradually, during my first assignments as an architect and my further studies, the subject has become clearer, more significant and increasingly fascinating. For nearly twenty years since then, I have been exploring the topic from different perspectives and for different purposes: practice, research and consultancy. However, an empirical approach has been the usual pattern of those activities with little chance to reflect on the subject itself and on its theoretical and methodological implications. This research is my opportunity to carry out this reflection.

Although this study derives from a professional and personal interest over many years, the topic has been the object of a recent resurgence of attention among academics and practitioners alike, and this trend has also motivated this study. Examples of this higher profile include the Urban Think Tank's book 'Informal City, the Caracas Case' (2005), the Harvard Design Magazine special issue 'Can designers improve life in non-formal cities? (2008) and the book 'Rethinking the Informal City' by Hernandez, Kellett and Allen (2010). However, these 'new' understandings that promote different and alternative ways to perceive popular settlements co-exist with 'old' ideas and perspectives. Among the 'old', which remains current thinking, strongly influencing policies in Colombia, is the idea of the existence of two cities within the city: the formal and planned alongside the informal, unplanned and illegal, which 'is the result of an urban, speculative and chaotic process of peripheral development, with no roads, transport and public services'[1] (Rueda Garcia 2000: 2). In this regard, despite interesting exceptions (especially at the municipality level which aim to upgrade these areas), polices are mainly designed to prevent these practices, eradicate these settlements whenever and wherever possible, and build new houses in other areas of the city in which to relocate people. Needless to say, these policies have achieved very limited results. 'Informal housing is shooting up, illegal dwellings increased by 17% in the last few years' ('*Vivienda informal esta "disparada", edificaciones ilegales subieron 17% en los ultimos años'*. "El Tiempo", May 11th, 2010). This theme of settlement development figures importantly in the international arena nowadays, but clearly more and better understanding is needed about the Colombian approach.

The 'old' views on popular settlements have limitations, but the 'new' ones have been challenged as well. Varley (2009) argues that this new literature on informal settlements may promote misleading perceptions, overlooking what exists behind those superficial impressions: the precariousness of the housing and the struggle of the people. Also, recent writings may give the wrong message to governments, as Torres and Castillo (2009) explain. They ask for structural changes in developmental policies in Colombia, because local and creative actions by people and organisations cannot on their own deal with the expanding and complex phenomenon of popular

[1] Original document in Spanish. All translations from Spanish to English are by the author.

settlements. However this 'new' literature argues that informality is not necessarily a problem, rather it can be an opportunity; in other words it can be seen as an alternative mode of production of space (Roy 2009). For Brillembourg Tamayo, Feireiss *et al*. (2005), popular settlements are the urban present and future for a large portion of the population in Latin America, and they could even be the key for the 21st century in terms of richness, inventiveness and achievement. Firstly, these 'new' ideas on informality acknowledge its value as a valid approach to urban space production. Secondly, they challenge binary and marginalising discourses such as formal/informal, legal/illegal, planned/unplanned and so on. They seek to see these settlements as they are, as parts of cities, with problems, opportunities and even with lessons for others about integrity, inclusion and diversity (Fiori and Brandao 2010: 190). Finally, the third contribution of these ideas is that they recognise the people behind the houses and the urban space. 'The informal sector has emerged as a complex system of social interactions' (Ramirez 2010: 138), as popular settlements are far more than houses and streets – they are people interacting with spaces. The dynamics of popular settlements go much beyond deficits of housing and urban facilities, as is the common currency in Colombian policies. These ideas are at the heart of this thesis, especially from the perspective of people and place interactions and how this relationship influences both the social and the physical aspects of the *barrio*.

In the light of all these points, what is an appropriate term for the subject of this research which avoids binary and marginalising discourses? This decision especially matters if we wish to include people explicitly in this identification. I have so far been using the phrase 'popular settlements', which is a direct translation from Spanish, meaning the settlements of the people or of the '*pueblo*'. However, it may imply some kind of binary approach. In this regard, post-colonial ideas come to mind, when one considers the argument that all cities – and parts of cities – should be called 'ordinary':

> *Rather than categorising and labelling cities as, for example, Western, Third World, developed, developing, world or global, I propose that we think about a world of ordinary cities, which are all dynamic and diverse, if conflicted, arenas for social and economic life.* (Robinson 2006: 1)

These settlements therefore could perhaps be called ‘ordinary’, with some extraordinary social, architectural and urban characteristics and challenges. This nomenclature also helps to approach them as they are, avoiding comparison with other parts of the city or with global ideas of informality. It would also accord with the purpose of this thesis to produce and value knowledge from the places themselves, the *barrios* in this case. Although these issues of definition are important for this research, they could cause confusion. Even though these settlements should be considered as ordinary in terms of how to approach them, they are non-ordinary in many aspects. In this regard, I will call them popular settlements, but the ‘ordinariness’ of the approach will be maintained. There are several other terms used in the literature to refer to these settlements, including: informal settlements, low income settlements and *barrios*. These three terms will be applied interchangeably to popular settlements; firstly, because it is the way that they appear in the literature studied; and secondly, for practical reasons.

1.2 Open or Public Spaces? The Relation between People and Place

This research investigates popular settlements, and the standpoint from which to see them lies in open spaces. Personal and professional reasons assisted me when deciding on the term ‘open spaces’. On the personal side, ‘public space’ – as I used to call it – was a topic relatively unknown to me when applied to popular settlements. During my architectural studies the subject was largely covered from the perspective of the ‘formal’ city, but almost nothing was said about the ‘informal’ part of the city. In the following years I had little direct contact with the subject because my main practice and research interests were based on housing; public space was something ‘additional’, something with apparently little importance for popular settlers. This personal perception, partially supported in the literature – or the lack of it – changed gradually until a few years before commencing this doctoral research, when I started to explore the issue in the *barrios*. Part of this exploration and fieldwork has been integrated into this research. At one point professional reasons entered into this process. The limited literature available on the subject – especially

when compared to that on housing – and the need for a better understanding of these places in the context of the *barrios*, encouraged me to consider the importance of open space. Once this research started and the initial literature was reviewed, I could confirm my early observations and reinforce my interest in researching public spaces in popular settlements.

One of my first concerns was that, according to the literature, 'public space' is not an accurate description of the places I wanted to research. 'If a place is equally accessible to everyone, irrespective of their physical abilities, age, gender, ethnicity, income level and social status, it can be called a public space' (Madanipour 2010: 242). This definition opens up a range of possible considerations and it can be argued that no space is 100% equally accessible to everyone. This is the case of 'public spaces' in the *barrios*, which are not entirely public; they are in terms of accessibility (to a certain extent) and ownership (most of them), but not in terms of use. This impacts on their accessibility. These spaces are closer to the communal, in which outsiders are identified and are not always welcome. Their entrance is not physically prevented, but they know they are in someone else's place. That was my experience when beginning the fieldwork, and only after I had visited a particular place several times and had got to know some of the people, did I feel that I had the right to be there, at least as a welcome visitor. When exploring the literature in depth I found that 'public' is a complex concept embedded in the dialectic between private and public with social, cultural and political implications. However, evidence in the *barrios* suggests it is a question of the relationship between inside the house and outside in the street, as Riaño (1990) argues, rather than a dichotomy between private and public. With this in mind, 'open spaces' looks appropriate for identifying these places for the purposes of this research.

Kohn (2004) identifies three components of a public space: ownership, accessibility and intersubjectivity. Ownership is related to public property, accessibility is about allowing entrance to everyone without restrictions, and intersubjectivity refers to fostering communication and interaction. Ownership may be understood similarly in contrasting the open spaces of the *barrios* with those of the city, but accessibility and intersubjectivity are seen differently. This can be explained – and will be argued in

this thesis – as the result of the close relationship between people and place. The open spaces of the *barrios* have particular characteristics because of their connection with the people. In other words they are socially produced and constructed. These twofold and overlapping concepts help explain how physical materiality is transformed, expressed and made meaningful. The interest, therefore, of this research is to explore the relationship between people and place in the open spaces of popular settlements. This relationship has been acknowledged in the literature; for example Holloway and Hubbard (2001: 7) argue that 'it has become axiomatic in human geography that as people construct places, places construct people (inferring the reciprocity between people and place)'; or Carmona (2010: 158): 'urban public space shapes and is shaped by society – its power relationships, priorities and its fears'. The idea is therefore, to investigate these relationships in the open spaces of the *barrios.*

Although open spaces in popular settlements are seldom studied in Colombia compared for example with housing issues, the current and somewhat limited vision of them can be seen from at least three perspectives. The first is the 'institutional' view, evident in national policies, which aims to prevent popular settlements flourishing and if possible eradicate and relocate them. In this context, where interest is mainly placed on housing and infrastructure, open spaces are rarely discussed. The second vision found in some municipal policies and programmes especially in Bogotá, centres round the belief that massive interventions in open spaces of the *barrios*, such as parks and boulevards, can contribute to upgrading these areas and improving living conditions. Partly inspired by the '*Favela Bairro'* programme in Brazil which promoted open spaces as social integrators, there is 'a strong reliance on the role that public space can play in bringing people together, stressing the importance of quality design and architecture' (Riley, Ramirez *et al*. 2001: 527). Although the recent projects developed in Bogotá are important, they are relatively limited in size and impact compared to the dimension of city and the people's needs. The third perspective is related to the production and use of these places, and is concerned with documenting social practices and open space appropriation. In the Colombian context the works of Riaño (1990), Saldarriaga (1996), Viviescas (1996), Rojas and Guerrero (1997), Niño and Chaparro (1997), and Avendaño and

Carvajalino (2000) constitute the main referents for this subject. This study, informed by the two first perspectives, aims to contribute to the debate of the third, the relation between people and place, and the design language and meanings associated with the materiality observed as a result.

1.3 Objectives, Themes and Research Questions

This study explores the relationship between people and open spaces in the popular settlements of Bogotá. People in these areas are developing their own built environments through their own ideas, initiatives and economic possibilities. The research aims to understand how *barrio* open spaces work and the ways in which local users produce, consume, transform, express and give meaning to those places. Open spaces in popular settlements, like the housing stock, are to a large extent the product of local self-help and self-management processes; however, a commensurate level of understanding has not been achieved, partly because they are often seen as spare spaces with little value. However, since the early stages of the *barrio* formation they play an important role in the physical and social dynamics of the settlements, although the improvement and consolidation of such spaces may not be realised for several years. By studying open spaces, this research also intends to contribute to the debate on popular settlements by viewing them as an opportunity to understand different ways of thinking about the city.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To identify and characterise open spaces in popular settlements in physical and social terms.
2. To examine open space production and transformation processes, and the different actors involved.
3. To investigate open spaces consumption patterns, from both functional and symbolic perspectives.
4. To explore form, design language and meanings associated with open spaces, and reflect on their relationship to production and consumption practices.

5. To contribute to the understanding of popular settlements and their potential to build city and community.

Three main themes will be covered theoretically and empirically in order to pursue the objectives proposed: popular settlements, open spaces, and the people-place relationship. The first is arguably the context and frame of the research; it also represents the final aim of the study. The second is the standpoint from which popular settlements are to be viewed, analysed and discussed. The third constitutes the theoretical and methodological tools used to conduct the enquiry. In practice, the three themes are linked together and make sense in their interrelation. The theoretical exploration identifies the key subjects aims to offer a balanced discussion between structural reasoning and recent alternative visions of the city.

In brief, theme one is about traditional and recent visions on popular settlements, explaining how the understanding of them has changed through time but with issues such as informality remaining as a central characteristic. Theme two explores open spaces from a general perspective and gradually focuses on popular settlements; however, specific literature on open spaces in the *barrios* tends to be less frequent, indicating a gap of knowledge in this area. Theme three investigates people-and-place relationships from three perspectives: 1) the social production of space; 2) the social construction of space; and 3) the design language and meaning of space. These themes are oriented by the following research questions:

1) How is open space designed, built, managed, transformed and sustained?

Open spaces in popular settlements, like housing, are largely produced and transformed by the people themselves, by the users. However there is little understanding of how they work, partly because these places are generally considered unimportant both with regard to the popular settlers and the city alike. This question investigates the production process of open spaces, inquiring into the development procedures, the actors involved and the roles played, as well as the upgrading strategies. This question is about the social production of open space.

2) What is the relationship between open spaces and the people (users) who create them?

Barrio open spaces are mostly used by the people who live nearby. They are also used by others who live and/or work in the same area, with the occasionally observed presence of outsiders. These spaces are consumed in two ways: functional and symbolic. The first may be understood as concerning physical and everyday use, the second as the experiential and representational. Both usages generate different levels of people-place relationship, and at the same time these exchanges influence the people and the place. This question investigates the consumption of open spaces in the *barrios* and its implications. It is about the social construction of open spaces.

3) What is the form and design language used in open spaces and how can it be understood and interpreted?

Open spaces in the *barrios* are closely related to the popular settlers, and this relationship is manifest in the built environment. The richness and creativity that can be found suggest the existence of a design language in these areas. This question is about how to understand and interpret this tangible and observable production; it is about the language and meaning of open space.

In sum, this research aims to develop greater understanding of the spatial and social dynamics of popular settlements. In particular about open space which has been traditionally overlooked in these settlements. It is mainly supported by qualitative and context-dependent data; however findings can be explanatory for similar contexts, namely Colombia and Latin America. This study is not directly policy-oriented, however it is hoped that discussions could inform policy debates. Last but not least, it is believed that this study could contribute in some way to improving living conditions in these settlements, by creating awareness of potentials and difficulties.

1.4 The Research Setting: Popular Settlements in Bogotá

The research location is Bogotá, my home town. But there are other reasons to select Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia. Colombia, as with the rest of Latin America, is highly urbanised with more than 70% of its population living in urban areas (Worldbank 2007). Bogotá is the largest urban agglomeration, and with nearly 7 million inhabitants easily surpasses the other large Colombian cities like Medellin, Cali or Barranquilla, with close to 2 million each (DANE 2007). 'From the distance, Bogotá looks anything but the supposedly impoverished Latin American metropolis' (Gilbert 1998: 2). It is the economic hub of the country, with per capita income over 140% above the national average and 15 points higher than the rest of the country in the quality of life index (Worldbank 2007). The last four municipal administrations have greatly improved the city with public spaces, libraries, schools and transport. However, this welfare has never been shared by the majority, according to a municipal report (2000) 49.6% of the population was below the poverty line which is nearly the same percentage of the existing urban areas that began as informal settlements (Martin Molano 2000). However, despite their scale, these settlements are not easily seen at first glance because popular settlements in Bogotá are normally located on the periphery. They are characterised by great shortages of economic and urban formal resources such as infrastructure and social services, and in many cases deficiencies in housing as well. The origin of these settlements is usually through one or a combination of the following processes: the 'standard way' (purchasing of developed or undeveloped plots from public or private companies), clandestine (plots that are sold by illegal developers), or land invasion. Indistinct as to their origins, many of these settlements gradually move towards consolidation thanks to self-build and self-help practices.

Popular settlements in Bogotá are a dynamic part of the city in physical, economic, social and cultural terms. Their development is largely determined by the inhabitants themselves. They are either informally or formally initiated, but after a few years it is no longer possible to confirm the origin of a specific part or the whole of them. They are constantly undergoing change and transformation, frequently with minimum support from public or private bodies. 'Informal settlements are by definition

unfinished projects in which the agency and creativity of the occupant-builders is central, in contrast to architect-produced architecture which emphasises the physical form of the buildings often at the expense of users' (Kellett 2008: 11).

Against the above panorama, 57 open spaces in popular settlements in Bogotá were chosen for this study. They are located in the four corners of the city and contain various types of spaces: streets, stairways, recreation parks, contemplative parks (or passive parks, as communities refer to them), and in various combinations. These cases correspond to data collected prior to registration for this degree, and are used as 'general' cases. Among them, six cases were selected to deepen the enquiry with further detailed fieldwork carried out for this research. The case studies are focussed on the main open space of the *barrio*, which in most of them is the '*cancha*' (*barrio* park); but also includes neighbouring streets and stairs and open areas interacting with them.

1.5 Methodology

A number of issues were taken into consideration when designing the methodology for this research. From questioning about enquiry and explanation to incorporating and reflecting on nearly 20 years of experience in the field. In other words, how to 'use' this research to reflect on that mainly empirical experience. Ideas were found along the way with literature and reflection, and in data terms it was decided to incorporate previous and appropriate accumulated information with more recently collected fieldwork data.

A qualitative approach was employed because of the nature of the research questions which aim to explore processes, interpretations and relationships. However some basic quantitative techniques were used for the 57 cases to identify trends and for descriptive purposes, as well as providing a general understanding and as a framework for the exploration of the six detailed case studies. The main methods used for data collection were observation and semi-structured interviews complemented by mapping, informal conversations, photography, photo-elicitation

and documentary sources. The general cases were analysed in terms of common features and patterns which helped to identify themes and make. This information was useful when approaching the specific cases which were analysed following traditional qualitative data procedures of code, memo, categorise and classify (Miles and Huberman 1994). Six draft reports were prepared, one for each case, where analysis and preliminary findings were discussed. These reports along with the analysis of the general cases constitute the main data sources for interpretation and argument building.

1.6 The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of eight chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the second, third and fourth chapters set up the theoretical, methodological and physical and social context framework for this research. Chapters five, six and seven discuss the production, consumption and design language and meaning of open spaces in popular settlements. Each chapter examines a particular subject, guided by each of the three research questions. However, as discussed further on, the relationship between the three subjects is close; it can be argued that each one is the cause and the consequence of the others. This is reflected throughout the thesis, but becomes clearer in chapter seven where the three subjects converge explicitly. Finally, chapter eight presents the concluding arguments of the thesis.

Chapter Two, **The Open Spaces of the *Barrio*: Themes and Theories**, examines the literature on five issues. Firstly, historic, current and alternative views on informal settlements: discussing the changing interpretations from illegal, marginal and problematic to proactive ideas which consider them 'as a way of life' (AlSayyad 2004: 27), and the possible key to urban development of Latin America cities (Brillembourg Tamayo, Feireiss *et al*. 2005). Secondly, ideas on urban outdoor spaces are explored, focusing on popular settlements. However, in contrast to the literature found on informal settlements and housing, literature on 'informal' urban spaces is limited, showing a gap of knowledge in this area. The last three sections of the chapter correspond to one of the research questions, which further on illuminates

the discussion of the analytical chapters. The first investigates the production of urban space which in the *barrios* is undertaken largely by the people. The second examines the consumption of place or the social construction of space. The last section presents theories and concepts on how the built environment observed in popular settlements can be understood.

Chapter Three, **Research Design and Methodology**, describes the approach to the study and the criteria used for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Within a qualitative approach the methods and analysis are discussed. The collection, analysis and interpretation of two sets of data from different time frames and with different specifications was the major methodological challenge. The chapter closes with an assessment of the methodology and identifies the ethical issues which are crucial when engaging with communities.

Chapter Four, **Open Spaces in Popular Settlements in Bogotá**, describes the research setting. A brief introduction to Bogotá's urban development followed by a discussion of popular settlements in the city; their evolution, current situation, and the policies and programmes that today profess to regulate and improve them. Within this frame, open spaces in the *barrios* are examined focussing on municipality programmes and the actors involved. Finally, the chapter introduces the cases in which the dynamics of production, consumption, design language and meaning are explored.

Chapter Five, **The Production of Informal Open Space**, is the first of three analytical chapters which explore the research findings. The chapter examines the social production of open space in popular settlements, exploring the dynamics of organisation and development, as well as the actors involved and the roles they play. It explains how the production of space in the *barrios* is primarily defined by the people, building a close relationship between people and place and influencing both the space and social interactions. It also examines how this is a permanent transformation process that is marked by internal and external conflicts.

Chapter Six, **People and Place: Everyday, Functional, Conflictive and Symbolic Interactions**, focuses on the consumption of open spaces in the *barrios* from different perspectives. It engages with the transformation of space through social construction, by means of tangible and intangible interactions. Similar to production, the consumption of open spaces is mainly effected by the *barrio* dwellers, with almost no outsiders using those places. In this regard, the relationship between people and place is enhanced. This chapter examines the functional, experiential and symbolic usages of open spaces, which contribute to shape the places but also affect social relations and interactions.

Chapter Seven, **Design Language and Meaning of Open Spaces in Popular Settlements**, discusses the tangible product in terms of form, language and meaning that is arguably linked to social production and construction practices, but also to creativity and choice. The chapter demonstrates that the design language found in *barrio* open spaces goes far beyond poverty and survival issues and is linked it to complex, overlapping and intense meanings. It examines the form of open spaces, the existence of typologies and other planning tools, and the role of green areas and urban furniture. It also looks at the aesthetics of the place from several perspectives and concludes with language and meaning arguments.

Finally, Chapter Eight, **Conclusions: Beyond Ordinary Open Spaces,** presents the concluding arguments**.** It returns to the questions and themes outlined in this introductory chapter and explores the implications of the preceding analyses for understanding open spaces in popular settlements. The various arguments involved in the thesis are drawn together and discussed, linking the main theoretical claims with the empirical investigation. The chapter confirms the richness of popular settlements in terms of social and physical structures and the need to go beyond binary constructions of formal/informal and legal/illegal which lead to consider these areas as solely marginal and problematic. It also confirms that open spaces in the *barrios* play an important role from the beginning of the settlements, and connect closely with the people, influencing social relations but also transforming places. Finally, it elaborates on the implications of the findings and identifies possible areas of future research.

2.1 Introduction

Before the industrial revolution, people provided themselves with shelter mainly through self-help and self-building. With technical developments and a growing economy, these practices were left to the more disadvantaged groups, especially in urban areas, and gradually lapsed from the formal procedures of the economy and the city. Urban expansion in the last five decades has contributed to the phenomenon of informal housing and informal settlements in general. In 2001, more than 75% of Latin Americans were living in cities, while over 30% (128 million) of this urban population were estimated to be living in conditions defined by the United Nations as slums (UNCHS 2003: 14). These figures may increase in the future, as new urban populations will require housing, public services and some kind of social welfare. Slums are characterised by lack of basic services, substandard housing or illegal and inadequate building structures, overcrowding and high density, unhealthy living conditions and hazardous locations, insecure tenure, poverty and social exclusion, and minimal settlement size (UNCHS 2003).

Although these figures bring the significance of the subject into sharp relief, this thesis is not about numbers or about defining these settlements solely in terms of what they lack, for the purposes of some kind of 'catch-up' approach; or, as Robinson (2006: 11) characterises it: 'the imaginative straightjacket of imitative urbanism and the regulating fiction of catching up to the wealthier'. The UNCHS report (2003: 9) recognises there is not a universal characterisation of these settlements and 'today, the catch-all term "slum" is loose and deprecatory'. This thesis is about understanding these settlements and the inter-relationships with their residents, the local users, qualitatively, through an insufficiently-studied topic: open spaces in the *barrios*. One of the first tasks, therefore, was to decide upon an appropriate term for these settlements. In the literature several cognate terms can be identified: for example, shanty, squatter, irregular, marginal, spontaneous, un-planned, informal and so on (see more in Payne 1989; Gilbert 2007). Most are defined in the negative, although the term 'informal' may include a positive

recognition of people's involvement in their production and transformation, as Kellett (2008) argues.

The term informal, however, is not beyond debate, which will be addressed in this chapter and throughout the thesis. It was decided, therefore, to use the term commonly applied to these areas in Latin America, and particularly in Colombia, which is 'popular settlements' (*asentamientos populares*). At the same time, for the sake of stylistic variety, 'informal settlements' and '*barrios'* will be used interchangeably, and other characterisations when appropriate.

Within this context, this chapter will examine the existing literature in order to provide an overview of the key themes and theories that govern this research. The chapter, then, is divided into five sections; the first two sections look at the contextual themes of the research: popular settlements and open spaces; while the three following sections discuss the ideas and concepts which will frame the analysis of the subject. While, for structural reasons, these sections are developed independently, it is noted that the themes are closely interconnected. Open spaces, being part and parcel of the urban creation and consolidation processes of popular settlements, cannot therefore be read as supplementary or marginal to informal settlers' needs or experience. By the same token, the production, consumption and language of space are parts of the same unity, and as will emerge in the text, a discussion about production easily broaches ideas of consumption, and language is itself understood on basis of the production and consumption of space.

Following this introduction, the first section is focused upon historical and recent literature on popular settlements, briefly explaining how the understanding of them has changed through time, but with issues such as informality remaining central. The second section explores the literature on open spaces from a general perspective and focuses on informal settlements. Specific developments on the subject tend, however, to be less frequent, showing a knowledge gap in this area. Section three investigates the production of urban space from the perspective of people's involvement - possibly the most important characteristic of popular settlements. It also covers the development process, along with the actors, roles and conflicts of this

relationship and how these materialise in the open spaces. In direct relation to the social production of space, section four examines the social construction of place by looking at the different uses to which open spaces are put. In a brief overview, the functional, perceptual and experiential ways of consuming places are discussed. Finally, section five addresses issues on built form and design language, taking as a starting point the fact that choice, representation and discrimination are exhibited in the architecture and urbanism of these settlements. The relationship between culture and built form is first discussed, especially in those settlements where the residents have been highly involved in the creation of the built environment. Next, ideas on vernacular settlements and everyday architecture are examined, which may help in understanding the formal production of these *barrios,* and contribute support to the idea of the existence of 'popular architecture'.

2.2 Popular Settlements

2.2.1 Historical and Traditional Perspectives

The literature on informal settlements begins around the 1960s, when the issue had become visible enough to attract attention. Encouraged by certain government agencies and inspired by the economic model for industrial and urban development which then prevailed, cities in Latin America underwent rapid urbanisation. Accounting for less than 40% of the population in the 1950s, by the beginning of the 1990s urban dwellers had come to represent 72% of the entire population (Gilbert 1994: 26). Rural-urban migration was at the centre of this growth, bringing massive numbers of people to cities which were not fully capable of accommodating them, forcing them to look out for themselves and to find alternative dwellings in informal settlements. Informal settlements were soon seen as a problem needing to be solved, both in terms of governments providing housing for people and in terms of eradicating these unplanned developments that had started to appear within and at the edges of cities. These settlements were illegal, and considered marginal and problematic. It was argued – and it is still the case for some elite groups in local contexts and for some public agencies around the world – that disadvantaged groups

would remain poor and marginal, that they were incapable, unaided, of making any improvement to their lives and to their physical environments. Such views were propounded by Oscar Lewis as part of his work on Mexico, linking them with the 'culture of poverty' and the 'culture of marginality' (Lewis 1963; 1966). This interpretation was, however, contested in the works of Mangin (1967) in Peru and Perlman in Brazil (1976), which refuted these 'myths of marginality' and other such common misconceptions.

But one of the major shifts in the approach to the subject was consolidated through John Turner's extensive research undertaken inside the *barriadas (barrios)* of Lima. This brought to light what poor people could do to organise and improve their houses and their living environments (Turner and Fichter 1972; Turner 1976). He suggested that informal settlements – far from being a problem – could be a solution to the question of housing and urban services; that those living there know best how to prioritise and use resources and meet their own needs. The idea of progressive development began to be documented here, and is still one of the main approaches in the study of informal housing and settlements. Turner's idea of supported self-help was promoted and funded across many countries in the 1970s and 1980s through the World Bank's programme of sites and services; however, this view has had its opponents since its inception. It is seen as a way for governments to evade responsibility for the structural social and economic problems which are at the heart of finding 'real' solutions to urban growth (Butterworth and Chance 1981). It is also seen as a way of exerting social control: 'By and large, community participation has been used by governments as a means of legitimating the political system,' (Gilbert and Ward 1984: 780) and creating a 'dependent' relationship between the government and disadvantaged communities, whereby the former 'tolerates' land occupations and informal upgrades in order to avoid confrontation and keep the city functioning (Gilbert, Hardoy *et al*. 1982; Gilbert and Ward 1985).

In Colombia these perspectives are very much alive, both in policy debate and in academic discussions, and alongside them people continue building and transforming their living environments largely through their own means. At the same

time, new evidence and theoretical approaches have enriched the discussion and have shed further light on the subject. These will be presented immediately after a brief discussion on what is possibly the 'core' issue of informal settlements: their informality.

2.2.2 Informality

Informality in Latin America operates at a scale beyond the settlement level: for many it represents a type of economic development. Informality also applies to social and cultural practices, qualifying expressions and manifestations which are not part of the mainstream. 'Informal' is usually defined as the opposite of 'formal': in economic terms, the formal is the capitalist, neoliberal and global economy; in urbanism, the formal is the planned, institutional and legal city; in cultural terms, the formal is arguably the contemporary version of the established traditions. Furthermore, 'formal' may imply legality, while informal may impute illegality. However, complications inevitably arise from such distinctions, because it is often difficult to distinguish between what is legal and what is illegal, and this can depend on the way law is applied. A settlement may start out as 'illegal' or 'informal', but after a period of time it is legalised; while in other cases, it would be difficult to judge if the settlement is legal or illegal, formal or informal. In addition, the size of the informal sector has increased rapidly, so that it is of equal dimensions to the formal, or even larger. Informal labour in Latin America in 2005 was undertaken by 48.5% of the population (International Labour Organization, cited in Donovan 2008: 32). Regarding building, 'In some cities, these informal submarkets have grown so rapidly that they now represent a majority of the entire housing stock and are the most common means poorer households obtain residential land and housing' (Payne 1989: 1). Currently, in many circumstances it can be difficult to distinguish the informal from the formal, and what is more, to be sure that to 'become formal' is the residents' objective; in other words, that the tacit journey from the informal towards the formal is possible and/or desired.

The informal economic sector in Latin America can help us to understand aspects of informal settlements. For Hernando De Soto (1987), the informal economy is 'the other path' to economic development, a 'silent revolution' by disadvantaged groups aiming to obtain the resources needed to make a living in cities. The informal economy comprises a large range of activities and circumstances, and perhaps the sole aspect common to them is that they are not registered with the government, and among other things, do not submit to taxation (Ruiperez Palmero 2006). Milton Santos (2000) argues that there are two economic circuits, one superior or formal and one inferior or informal; however, both are interconnected, one depends on the other and vice-versa, in the sense that they are part of the same whole. 'The informal sector is characterised by a lack of, or basic, technology, low productivity, informal job engagement and self employment' (The Regional Plan for Employment for Latin America and The Caribbean, cited in Ruiperez Palmero 2006: 65). Palma (1988) explains economic activities in the *barrios* as being 'the values, practices and culture which contribute to organise daily [economic] activities based on mutual help'. He calls these practices '*lo popular'* (the popular), which includes informality, family involvement, and individual, collective and community survival strategies. '*Lo popular'* also includes organization and culture; for Palma '*lo popular'* and poverty are not necessarily the same, therefore the popular is not defined by what it lacks (*las carencias*), but rather by its basis in the proposals, initiatives and contributions of the people.

> *These [informal economic practices] have passed from being observed as transitional to a formalisation, to be seen as a valid and necessary alternative for the survival of many in the continent. It does not only comprise an economic type, but is seen as a means of organization which includes also social and cultural dimensions.* (Ruiperez Palmero 2006: 105)

Informal settlements can also be understood as part of an informal sector or '*lo popular',* where people themselves look for better opportunities to improve living conditions than might be found within the formal sector of the economy. '*Lo popular'* generates social and cultural dynamics that can be observed in the *barrios* and in the materiality of their built environment: these form the focus of this research.

Arguably, the discussion of the relationship between informality and formality is at the centre of the current debate on informal settlements: is informality close to illegality, and on these grounds, should the aim be to eradicate it, as traditional views imply? Or is informality a valid alternative to formality, and as such, should it be permitted and even promoted, as some views suggest? Is informality a step on the tacit journey towards formality, as a strand of traditional and current argument would have it? There are no direct answers to these questions, but only elaborations around them, which themselves confirm the subjects' complexity. On the one hand, informal settlements are a consistent feature of Latin American cities, not a marginal component but a central one, as different authors have proposed (Brillembourg, Feireiss *et al*. 2005; Hernandez and Kellett 2010; Lima and Pallamin 2010). Furthermore, 'Informal practices of urbanisation and urban life coexist with regulated urban development in a vast territory of contrasting physical, social and legal conditions' (Lima and Pallamin 2010: 39). But on the other hand, informal settlements are to a large extent defined by comparison with the formal section of the city, implying that they should become formalised in the future (see for example Rueda Garcia 2000).

The next section will discuss other views which, to an extent, try to overcome this dualism: for example Kellett (1995: 27) argues that formal and informal are two dimensions which are intrinsically interconnected: 'formality and informality from a variety of disciplines [have] demonstrated that the two sectors are far from independent and separate'. In this regard, it can be argued that informal settlements are, no more nor less than any other area part of the city: indeed, they are the city. This is in line with Robinson's (2006) proposal to avoid characterizing urban areas in relation to others, but rather to understand them just as they are.

2.2.3 Present and Alternative Views

> *Informal settlement processes are now the dominant form of housing production in the rapidly expanding cities of Latin America. These cities are the sum of the continuing actions of low-income households each attempting to construct in physical terms their vision of the life and values to which they aspire. Such visions are ambitious and require the commitment of prodigious*

> *energy and creativity, leading in turn to a hybrid domestic architecture rich in meaning. Exploration of self-made environments can offer insights into the critical role of domestic architecture in consolidating and transforming economic relations and cultural identity.* (Kellett 2002: 28)

Popular settlements not only make up a large portion of Latin American cities, but are also a dynamic part of them in physical, social and cultural terms. Fiori and Brandao (2010: 188) argue that 'Urban informality is inexorably interwoven with the city as a whole – at all scales and levels – and has to be seen as another way of being in the city and constructing it'. Informal settlements are also seen as innovative and creative: 'Today we recognize the innovative genius of the urban poor in taking advantage of the specific cultural opportunities to survive and improve their living conditions' (AlSayyad 1993: 5). In terms of the built environment, these settlements are subject to different interpretations: 'We do not believe "informal" means "lacking form". It implies, for us, something that arises from within itself and its makers, whose form has not been recognised, but which is subject to rules and procedures potentially as specific and necessary as those that have governed official, formal city-making' (Brillembourg and Klumpner 2010: 120). Or in the association with vernacular settlements: 'spontaneous settlements, no less than the more widely admired traditional vernacular ones, can teach designers much' (Rapoport 1988: 72-73); furthermore, design and construction procedures rooted in local contexts can be similar to those found in traditional settlements (Oliver 2006).

Today, informality is not only associated with poverty, marginality and deprivation; it is increasingly accepted as an alternative way of doing things. '*Lo popular'* is acknowledged as a strategy used by informal settlers faced with their everyday economic realities, but is also referred to in relation to social and cultural practices. Informality is not necessarily construed as a transitional step to formality, among other reasons because the borderline between the two is increasingly becoming blurred. In other words, the relationship between formality and informality is very close. In economic terms, formal and informal activities are highly interconnected; and in urban contexts, well consolidated informal settlements can eventually become indistinguishable from formal settlements, especially when upgrading programmes have taken place and land tenure regularisation has been implemented (Kellett 2005).

For some, urban informality 'emerges under a paradigm of liberalization' and cannot be understood outside the context of globalization, as an alternative way of thinking and performing: 'urban informality not only as a political economy but also as a way of life' (AlSayyad 2004: 26-27).

However, these views are not shared by all. For Varley (2009) the emerging literature on the 'new slum urbanism' may promote misleading images of informal settlements. She argues that *'favelas' (barrios)* have become an 'iconic image of informal urbanity', an image that may make one forget what lies behind: the precariousness of housing and the struggle of the people. Or it may even exalt the visual over all other dimensions, exerting a fascination that could also contribute to 'cement and universalise' formal/informal dualism, and their inconvenient associations of acceptability and good practice. In the same respect, Robinson (2006), in her call to postcolonialise urban studies, argues that we should get away from developmentalist approaches to understanding cities in the global south, which imply a sort of 'catching-up' with cities in the north, and a replication of the same informal/formal dualism explained earlier. For Viviescas, Gomez *et al*. (1989) and Torres (2007), informal settlements are clearly a problem that needs to be tackled through a top-down approach, with structural political and economic changes. They acknowledge the great inventiveness and creativity of informal settlers in finding ways to meet their daily needs, but they believe it is the government's role to provide proper housing and urban facilities for all, and should not be left to the people by themselves.

These critics pose valid concerns that need to be taken into consideration; however, to some extent they also confirm a binary view of the formal and informal, and highlight the complexity of the subject. Although for years research has been highlighting the interconnectedness of the formal and informal (Bromley 1978; Moser 1994; Kellett 1995; Santos 2000; Ward 2004), there still exists a vivid dualism of discourse around the subject of the formal and the informal city, both in policymaking and academic debate. This dualistic perception has reinforced ideas of

'informal' sectors as separate and inferior to 'formal' ones, with their ability to offer better life chances; thus informal sectors are envisaged as mere transitional stages on the way to the 'formal' city. These perceptions may have been influenced by the other dichotomies through which informal settlements are commonly approached: legal/illegal, traditional/modern and urban/and rural (Robinson 2006); and researched with mostly quantitative measures as opposed to qualitative understandings. 'As a result, in housing and planning debates, policy makers have often failed to understand what life is like for the poor' (Devas and Radoki cited in Lombard 2009: 8). In this regard, some of the alternative views of popular settlements aim to overcome these binary discourses by approaching them from a qualitative perspective and understanding them within their own context, 'emphasi[sing] the fluid dynamic nature of urban informal settlements, as constituted by social processes rather than static categorisations' (Lombard 2009: 296). These ideas lie at the heart of this thesis, although a tacit and sometimes explicit 'comparison' with 'other parts of the city' is nonetheless unavoidable. This is on the one hand in order to explain and clarify particular themes, but on the other hand because dichotomy and complexity are a necessary part of understanding popular settlements.

Popular settlements are an overwhelming reality for most Latin American cities and the developing world; for many, they have been the only way to gain access to housing and urban facilities; and the results in terms of quantity and quality can be discussed in a positive light. Popular settlements are the urban present and future for a large portion of the global population - they could even be the key to 21st century urbanism - and can give important lessons in terms of richness, inventiveness and achievement (Brillembourg, Feireiss *et al*. 2005). Informal settlements also provide an opportunity for understanding different ways of seeing and thinking about the city (Brillembourg, Feireiss *et al*. 2005; Roy 2009; Hernandez and Kellett 2010). The next section will explore the issue of open spaces, as seen against the background of these ideas on popular settlements.

2.3 Open Spaces in Popular Settlements

2.3.1 Urban Outdoor Spaces

There is a wide range of terms referring to urban outdoor spaces, or 'life between house spaces' to paraphrase Gehl (1987): public spaces, semi-public spaces, urban areas, open spaces, communal spaces, and so on. Public space tends to be dominant in the literature, and in that regard it was a first choice definition for urban outdoor space, as the subject of this research. However, on further investigation, it was found that public space is not completely accurate as an identification of *barrio* outdoor space: there are conceptual and practical differences. Under the following three sub-headings, an attempt to characterise these spaces is developed. Two ideas are discussed as a starting point: firstly, that urban outdoor spaces are about comparative degrees of publicness and privateness (Madanipour 1999; 2003); and secondly, how the interrelationship between people and places may affect both sides of the behaviour-morphology interaction (Viviescas 1997; Chaparro Valderrama 1998; Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003; Madanipour 2003; Paramo and Cuervo Prados 2006).

From the first perspective, spaces in the city are largely regulated by the relationship between private and public: '[...] we live in and pass through private and public spaces and feel and behave accordingly. From the intimate space of the home to the interpersonal space of the school or workplace and the impersonal space of the busy city streets' (Madanipour 2003: 1). Benn and Gauss (1983) argue that there are three broad aspects which constitute the dimensions of publicness and privateness: access, agency and interest. They further divide access into physical access to space, access to activities, access to information and access to resources; as in the example where someone can actually enter the space but cannot share in the activities going on or being proposed for that place. In the same way, agency and interest show different levels of publicness and multiple perspectives for urban outdoor spaces (Table 2.1). Madanipour (2003) explains private and public on three levels: first, spatial scale: body, home, neighbourhood and city; second, degrees of exclusivity and openness: from the most private to the most public; and third, modes of social encounter and

association with space: personal, interpersonal and impersonal. With the body and the home being the most private, and the impersonal public spaces of the city (square, plazas and streets of the city centre) the most public, neighbourhood outdoor urban spaces are defined as communal and as spaces of familiarity (table 2.1). This links with the second idea, that urban outdoor spaces are largely defined by their relation with the people in terms of functional and symbolic purposes. Public space, therefore, is not just the opposite of private, and is not only defined by ownership and accessibility. Each public space is defined according to how it is used (Gehl 1987; Niño and Chaparro 1997; Segovia and Oviedo 2000; Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003; Madanipour 2003); in other words, through the inter-relationship between people and place.

Table 2.1: Private and public spaces of the city, dimensions and levels

	Private	**Intermediate**	**Public**
Dimensions (Benn and Gauss)			
Access	physical access is allowed for some		physical access is allowed for all
	access to activities only for those involved		access to activities for everyone
	access to information only for those involved		access to information for everyone
	access to resources only for those involved		access to resources for everyone
Agency	private agency		public agency
Interest	Interest to few people		Interest to many people
Levels (Madanipour)			
Spatial scale	Body		
	Home		
		neighbourhood	
			city
Degrees of exclusivity/ openness	more exclusivity and less openness		less exclusivity and more openness
Modes of social encounter and association with space	Personal		
		interpersonal	
			impersonal

From the second perspective – the relationship between people and place – Castells (cited in AlSayyad 2004: 26) argues that: ‘space has no inherent meaning, being only an expression of social forces. In other words, social relations cannot be deduced

from spatial facts, and there may be only a tenuous correlation between social and spatial variables'. However, for Carmona, Heath *et al*. (2003: 106) there is a two-way relationship between people and space: 'People are not passive, however; they influence and change the environment, as it influences and changes them.' People define spaces by using them. Gehl (1987) divides the activities developed in open spaces into three categories: necessary, optional and social activities. 'Necessary' are more or less compulsory activities, such as walking through the space to reach a bus stop, for example. 'Optional' are voluntary activities, such as sitting on a bench; and 'social' are activities that depend on the presence of others, such as chatting or playing. In Gehl's argument, poor quality public spaces facilitate the first category only, implying that the more used a space is, the better its quality. For Carmona, Heath *et al*. (2003: 109) the public realm, and the related overlapping concept of public life, has 'physical (space) and social (activity) dimensions' and 'involves relatively open and universal social contexts'. For Paramo and Cuervo Prados (2006: 23), urban outdoor spaces are 'places to meet others, to rest, to play, to celebrate, and other things pertaining to urban conviviality'. Madanipour (1999: 880) adds that these spaces 'have always had political significance'. In symbolic terms, there may even be additional purposes for urban outdoor spaces; for example Viviescas (1997) presents them as the expression-scenario of the people, the place for confrontation and cultural production, the place to discuss the material and transcendent matters of individuals and societies, and the place to build community.

2.3.2 Dimensions and Physical Scope of Open Spaces

The public and private spaces of the city are defined by each other and have overlapping economic, social, cultural and political dimensions.

> *In economic terms, the private or public ownership of land and property determines the overall shape of the city. In political terms, the relationship between private and public realms was a formative notion in the development of modern democracies and continues to be a key governance concern. In cultural and social terms, the distinction between the public and the private in the routines of daily life is crucial to the relations between self and other, individual and society.* (Madanipour 2003: 3)

The same dimensions can be used to explore the potentialities and confrontations arising from, and over, urban open spaces; and thus help to define and understand them. In economic terms, apart from land ownership, economic opportunities can arise when spaces are used for trading activities. However, some may see these activities as problematic, as in the case of street vendors: 'They are now perceived not as agents of innovation, but as anathema to city makers who claim traders congest cities and create "broken windows" that generate disorder, blight and crime' (Donovan 2008: 30).[2] In political terms, urban open spaces continue to be important in helping to build community awareness and facilitate participation processes (Oviedo and Abogabir 2000). However, at the same time, open spaces are tools for symbolizing the authority of the state and other powerful groups, and the struggle for supremacy can be a delicate matter. For authors such as Rosenthal (2000: 34) the nature of open space 'is often less physical than it is social and situational, the struggle between different elements of the city to manipulate politics and control its daily life has often been violent, leaving deep imprints in the collective memories of places'. Social and cultural dimensions have been touched on earlier, and will be further developed in the following sections.

The outdoor spaces of the city frame and give context to functional and symbolic activities, and therefore form important dimensions in themselves. At the same time, these spaces work in terms of the city as a whole, shaping and defining it. Carmona, Heath *et al.* (2003) review six dimensions of urban design, which can be useful in exploring the physical scope of urban outdoor spaces: the morphological, the perceptual, the social, the visual, the functional and the temporal dimensions. In terms of city cohesion, Lynch (1963) argues that public spaces, apart from giving form and expression to cities, can be nodes and landmarks that make cities more legible. Carmona, Heath *et al.* also explain how urban spaces differ in shape and size, albeit falling within two predominant types: 'streets (roads, paths, avenues, lanes, boulevards, alleys, malls, etc.) and squares (plazas, circuses, piazzas, places, courts, etc.)' (2003: 141).

[2] The phenomenon of street vendors is not the subject of this research, but arguably is closely related to it. In the analysis chapters, the subject will be discussed with regard to its relationship with the social production and construction of open spaces in popular settlements.

Similarly, the variety of uses for urban outdoor space is also a matter of relevance. In the Colombian context, Niño and Chaparro (1997) include '*la cancha'* (sports pitch) as an important open space, which is especially significant in the *barrios*, as will be discussed later on. Carmona (2010) argues the need to broaden the definition of public space to include other less 'typical' uses, with the category of what he calls semi-public or 'third' spaces. For example, coffee shops, bookstores or the British pub, where relatively public access is allowed and social interactions are developed. In the *barrios* of Bogotá this 'type' of space is also important: the '*tienda'* (local store) or the '*salon comunal'* (community meeting room) are perhaps the best examples, where many of the everyday public activities of the *barrio* take place.

2.3.3 Open Spaces in Popular Settlements

Open spaces in popular settlements play an important role in physical and social dynamics, and, as in the case of housing, they are largely developed by local people. However, very little attention has been given to them, in comparison with the extensive literature on housing issues. Open spaces are the most important social places in the *barrio*; they are also places for cultural exchange and building values (Niño and Chaparro 1997; Viviescas 1997; Segovia and Oviedo 2000; Hernandez Bonilla 2001). Often, open spaces in the *barrios* begin life in a context of confrontation. If they have been allocated by the developer (legal or illegal), these spaces are sometimes invaded 'or somehow privately occupied and likely to disappear' (Hernandez Bonilla 2008: 394, in reference to the Mexican context). If the origin of the settlement was through land invasion, the original settlers may plan the location of these spaces but they will also be subject to 'invasion' by other settlers or public or private bodies trying to 'recover' the land. 'Conflict is an intrinsic characteristic of low income neighbourhoods as a result of disputes over land. Inhabitants struggle to take control of the spaces, and protect them against external-internal agents who want to privatise a collective property' (Hernandez Bonilla 2008: 404).

The relationship and exchange between the dwelling place and the open space is another important characteristic in these settlements. Open space is frequently seen as an extension of the home, which is often small and limited. Doors and windows are the connection points, and it is not uncommon to find them open, and thus functioning as transitional elements through which the open space enters the house and the house extends into the street. Ontiveros and De Freitas (2006) in their research on open spaces in the *barrios* of Venezuela found a close relationship between the interior and the exterior, whereby the interior is a place totally impregnated with exterior social space and vice-versa. In this regard, Riaño (1990) argues that open spaces in popular settlements are more concerned with the relationship between the home's interior and the street outside, than the dichotomy between the privateness of the home and the publicness of the open space.

Returning to the previous discussion, it can be argued that the open spaces of the *barrio* are neither fully private nor fully public, but rather represent places of transition between these two extremes as presented in Table 2.1. In terms of access, they are usually physically open to anyone in the sense that there are no material barriers such as gates, walls and so on (though facilities for disabled people are very rarely found), thus making these places almost-public. However, in terms of access to activities, information and resources, these spaces are only open to those involved with the *barrio;* in other words, the members of the community. In this respect, open spaces are more akin to private areas. With regard to agency, they are not privately instituted, and in many instances they are not publicly (municipally) promoted either; furthermore, for most of the time, these spaces are the result of individual or collective initiatives. In this regard, the open spaces of the *barrios* fall approximately in betwixt private and public. Regarding interest, these spaces tend to implicate only the interests of the people who live around and nearby; this again making them close to private areas. In terms of spatial scale, these are neighbourhood spaces, classified as in between the private spaces of the body and the home and the public spaces of the city. With regard to degrees of exclusivity and openness, it can be argued that these spaces are nearer to being private, belonging rather exclusively to those involved and not very open to outsiders. Similarly, in terms of modes of social

encounter and association with space, open spaces of the *barrio* tend to be regarded as intermediate between the personal and the impersonal.

Open spaces in the *barrios* are often associated with a pedestrian scale (Segovia and Oviedo 2000). The main open space is the pavement and the street (Niño and Chaparro 1997), with pavements in the *barrios* not always being clearly defined and sometimes even non-existent. Stairs are seen as types of street, owing to the fact that steep topography is a characteristic in many popular settlements. The pavement is not just a thoroughfare, it is the open space closest to the house, and, as described earlier, much of the activity of the *barrio* is related to it. The pavement and the street are a playground for children, a meeting and chatting place for most *barrio* dwellers, a place to celebrate with friends and '*compadres'*[3] and in general a place to socialise. Shops display their goods outside to increase their visibility to potential customers, people buy beers in the '*tiendas'* (stores) and enjoy them on the pavement.

The most significant open space in the settlement is the '*parque del barrio'* (*barrio* park), also called '*la cancha'* (the sports field), recalling the plaza or the main square of colonial cities, and wherever possible, located in a central area of the *barrio*[4]. The *parque del barrio* accommodates 'traditional' public square activities such as strolling, meeting people, resting, alongside, for example, other activities such as playing football. These *parques* have more in common with sports pitches and/or playgrounds, with some children's facilities, than they resemble green/paved areas or resting places. Active recreation activities characterise these areas and distinguish them from other open spaces of the city (Riaño 1990; Beardsley and Werthmann 2008). Some of them are also important in terms of the community institutions located at their periphery: the community room, the church, the school and the health services (Niño and Chaparro 1997). This is also the place where material objects that give some meaning to the community can be found; some, such as statues, easily identifiable as significant, others less so – for example, a painted rock where young people meet.

[3] '*Compadre*' (godfather) is commonly used informally, to mean buddy, mate, friend.
[4] Colonial in origin, but now an essential component of urban form. In the analysis chapters, there will be further discussion of the subject

Literature on open spaces in informal settlements is limited, and tends to be vague, or not directly relevant (with some interesting exceptions). One of the first concerns of this research regards how to identify these spaces. In general terms the literature refers to these places as 'public spaces', but on closer examination – especially regarding how they are used and their relationship with the local people – it can be said that they do not fit well into this category. They are closer to semi-private spaces or communal spaces in terms of their use; however, they remain public in terms of ownership and accessibility. In this respect, 'open spaces' is a more appropriate term. This research intends to contribute to this debate and in general to broaden the understanding of these places, by exploring their production, consumption and meaning. Having identified the key aspects regarding popular settlements and open spaces, this discussion now moves on to the analytical 'tools' that will be used to understand these places. The next section starts with the first of them: the production of urban space.

2.4 The Production of Urban Space

2.4.1 The Social Production of Space

'Informal settlements are by definition unfinished projects in which the agency and creativity of the occupant-builders is central' (Kellett 2008: 11). Kellett sums up two characteristics of these settlements: first, the production of space in these settlements is a permanent transformation process; and secondly, the involvement of locals is crucial in this production. The production of space in informal settlements is largely steered by the people. The 'space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations' (Lefebvre 1991: 286). 'Social space "incorporates" social actions, the actions of subjects both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act' (*ibid.*: 3). But the production of space is also mediated by consumption, as Harvey (1996) argues: production and consumption processes work in a dialectical relationship. Therefore, production and consumption are part of the same spatial transformation process. However, for explanatory purposes, this first

part will deal with the production of space, while the following section will focus on the consumption and the social construction of space. 'The social production of space includes all those factors – social, economic, ideological, and technological – the intended goal of which is the physical creation of the material setting' (Low 1996: 861). Harvey (1996: 21) believes that there is a reciprocal relationship between production and product; however, he argues 'we should focus on processes rather than things and we should think of things as products of processes'. In the same respect Lefebvre (1991: 36) states: 'If space is a product, our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production.' It can be argued, therefore, that the production, consumption and form of social space can be seen as interconnected elements, each being the consequence of the other and vice-versa; within a social, economic, ideological and technological context.

Regarding space production and transformation as a social phenomenon, Lefebvre (1991) identifies three moments of social space. The first is the *spatial practice* 'which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation' (1991: 33). This is the perceived, material space. The second moment is labelled *representations of space* 'which are tied to the relations of production and to the "order" which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs to codes, and to "frontal" relations' (1991: 33). This is the conceptualized space of social scientists, including architects and planners. The third moment is *representational spaces*, 'embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground code of social life, as also to art' (1991: 33). This is the lived space – lived through its associated images and symbols, the space of inhabitants and users. Each of Lefebvre's social spaces can be associated and discussed in terms of the three subjects of this research: production, consumption and form of open spaces in informal settlements. The perceived space, the *spatial practice*, is the materiality observed, the form. The conceptualized space, the *representations of space*, is about the conceptions around the process and the product. And the lived space – the *representational space* – is about use and consumption, both in functional and imaginary terms (Silva 1992; Soja 2000). The former will be the focus of the section on 'built form and aesthetics' in this chapter; the latter in the section on 'the

construction of social space'; while the *representation of space* permeates all the sections because it is precisely about concepts and theories on how social space is observed.

2.4.2 The Development Process

Regarding the production of urban space, the development process is important in order to understand the stages, forces and actors involved in the creation and transformation of the urban environment: 'every society – and hence every mode of production with its sub variants – produces a space, its own space' (Lefebvre 1991: 31). Carmona, Heath *et al.* (2003: 214) group the models of development into five types: (1) the *equilibrium models*, 'derived from Neo-classical economics, these assume that development activity is structured by economic signals about effective demand, as reflected in rents, yields, etc.'; (2) the *event-sequence models*, 'derived from estate management, these focus on the management of stages in the development process'; (3) the *agency models*, derived from behavioural or institutional explanations, these focus on the actors and their relationships in the development process'; (4) the *structure models*, 'grounded in political economy, these focus on the way markets are structured, the role of capital, labour and land in the development process, and the forces that organise the relationships and drive the dynamics of the process'; and (5) the *institutional models*, which 'describe events and agencies and explain how they relate to broader structural forces'. The third and the fifth models are especially important for a broader understanding of the production of urban space in the *barrios*; where the agency of the local actors is very significant, and of equal importance are the relations between them, and with external actors (government, NGOs, for example) as well as with the context (physical, social and symbolic).

For Romero, Mesias *et al.* (2004) the social production of habitat (PSH, for the initials in Spanish) in the *barrios* (including the home, the urban space and facilities) is the hands of the people. Families provide themselves with housing and urban services by means of rent, by purchase from public or private bodies or through self-

help practices. However, 'self help is the more widespread way in which housing and urban environment is currently produced in the cities of Latin America' (2004: 29). PSH is a 'theoretical and practical' concept promoted by the Latin American branch of the Housing International Coalition (HIC) to characterise this practice, and Romero , Mesias *et al*. (2004: 30) propose some ways to improve it: 'PSH should integrate new strategies to boost the efforts of the people to produce their own habitat' They demand a production system that takes into account positive aspects such as flexibility in spaces and functions, links with the local economy by means of *barrio* businesses, and the creation of urban spaces for social interaction. They also seek a system that diminishes current obstacles in terms of lack of adequate public services, lack of resources and unsuitable building land. These authors confirm what others have argued earlier: people are at the centre of the social production of space in informal settlements. This implies the participation of the people in the transformation of their own environment which can be either in terms of formal participation or individual or collective involvement. This, and also the role of other actors in the process, is the subject of the following section.

2.4.3 Actors, Roles and Conflicts

> *The process of designing and producing the built environment involves a variety of actors or decision-makers, each with their own objectives, motivations, resources and constraints, and connected in various ways.* (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 213)

Carmona, Heath *et al*. (2003) also identify the key actors in the production of urban space: developers, landowners, providers of funds and investors, development advisers, builders, occupiers, the public sector and the community at large (residents, businesses and general public), all embedded within their own political and economic agendas. Depending on the type of 'project', all or only some actors are included, bearing in mind that some of them can play different roles within the same project. In informal settlements, two main actors are involved, who accomplish between them most of the roles implied in the previous classification. These are communities (acting individually or collectively) and the public sector. Apart from

these, and confirming the diverse origins of popular settlements, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the private sector may have a role in some initiatives.

Arguably in popular settlements, it is always in fact the users who are the leading actors: whether in the form of organised communities, or via collective or individual actions. In this regard, there are at least three ways to understand the involvement of the people in the production of their own environment: community participation, collective initiative, and individual actions. All of them play a role and are seen in action in the *barrios*. Participation is a 'complex' term that evokes different arguments and passions. For Romero, Mesias *et al*. (2004: 35) for example, it is 'in the centre of the change of dynamics of the social production of habitat' while for Gilbert and Ward (1984: 921): 'There is certainly little sign of participation in the sense of growing control by poor people over resources and institutions that determine their quality of life.' However, participation does play a role in the production of space in informal settlements, and this role cannot be denied or overlooked, though it can be improved.

> *The best processes of community participation ensure that everyone involved has a stake in the outcome and that therefore they have some measure of control over it. The best processes ensure that all concerned will share the responsibilities, profits and risks of what they will decide to do*. (Hamdi 1991: 75)

There are several definitions of participation, some of them oriented towards social development, others to different scales in the production of urban space; but in general reference is made to the political arena and the decision-making process (Hernandez Bonilla 2007). By comparison, collective initiatives and individual actions are usually directed to specific needs, and the involvement of other actors, such as the municipality, is almost non-existent. These initiatives are commonly self-funded and are seen as rapid responses to urgent issues, which in the end may transform – even more than community-participation projects – *barrio* open spaces.

Another key player in the production of space in informal settlements is the public sector. This is elaborated by Carmona, Heath *et al*. (2003: 227) as 'government bodies, regulatory agencies and planning authorities [which] seek to regulate the

development and use of land through the planning system, other means of regulation, provision of infrastructure and services, and involvement in land assembly and development'. Planning, housing and regulatory policies are public sector responsibilities, along with the implementation of programmes and projects at local level, some of which have been relatively successful in Bogotá (see for example Works with an Educational Outcome -Obras con Saldo Pedagogico- in Hataya 2007; Hernandez 2008). However, the role of the public sector in these settlements is not always concerned with planning, regulation and development; rather it is seen to a large extent as applying a 'catch-up' approach to *barrio* development dynamics (Viviescas, Gomez *et al*. 1989). In a number of instances, the public sector role has been to try to recover land subject to squatting, to negotiate with communities, to legalise the *barrio*, to provide infrastructure, and so on.

The production of space in informal settlements draws in other actors whose involvement and roles vary depending on the type of project and the context. NGOs and social/cultural groups such as churches may play a role by helping people to organise, or by mediating between the community and the government or even through contributing financial resources. Politicians may also be linked to these processes: 'An issue of real importance in the process of community participation and petitioning is the degree to which community organizations are linked into the wider partisan political system' (Gilbert and Ward 1984: 920). Local politicians 'help' communities in exchange for support in forthcoming elections (Hernandez 2009). Two final actors referred to in the Carmona, Heath *et al*. (2003) classification are the private sector and the builders. In informal settlements, the former is almost non-existent; although there have been some privately-initiated projects in Bogotá, especially in recent years, but many of them have been unsuccessful because they usually perform beneath expectations and over budget: 'The solutions offered to low-income users did not fulfil minimum expectations' (Tarchopulos and Ceballos 2003: 16). However, the second category, the builders, are frequently the selfsame users who actually build (self build), or organise themselves to get someone to build for them (self help). These have been extensively documented in the literature (see for example Kellett 1995).

Conflict is usually part of informal settlements, given their contested origins. In the production of urban space, different actors involved follow their different agendas and negotiate what they want to achieve (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003). The production process takes place through a complex pattern of negotiation and struggle between the different actors involved (Bentley 1999). Moreover, '[p]ublic space is always a space of conflict; it is a site of struggle over who controls and who has access to it, who determines its constitution, and how it is reproduced' (Deusen 2002: 150). The production of urban space also implies a political dimension within the planning process, which involves discussion, negotiation and agreement among the actors. This subject will be further developed in the context and analysis chapters, as will the discussion around the actors and their roles - arguably key themes in analysing the production of open spaces in popular settlements.

2.5 The Construction of Place

2.5.1 The Social Construction of Space

If the production of space contributes to understanding how spaces are created and transformed in physical terms, and illustrates the interaction of the different political, social, cultural and economic forces that may be involved, the direct interaction of people with space also offers information on how the space is transformed by means of its consumption. Production and consumption are part of the same 'unit' in understanding place as a socio-spatial entity. This is especially significant in open spaces of popular settlements, where the people's involvement in their production and consumption is high.

> *Social construction may then be conveniently reserved for the phenomenological and symbolic experience of space as mediated by social processes such as exchange, conflict and control. Thus the social construction of space is the actual transformation of space – through people's social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting – into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning.* (Low 1996: 861-862)

By the same token, the product – the built forms – also include the spaces that are defined and bounded, but not necessarily enclosed, such as the uncovered areas of a square, or a street. These forms and spaces are also interconnected with the production and consumption of the space; again, this is especially important in informal settlements.

Place-making can be also seen as an appropriate tool to understand the construction of place and the creation of meanings through people-interaction. Place-making has been defined by Schneekloth and Shibley (1995: 1) as 'the way in which all of us as human beings transform the places in which we find ourselves into places in which we live'. This concept allows the examination of the different actors involved within a political, social, spatial and cultural context. In this regard, it stresses the agency of the people in the transformation of their places by means of their interaction with them. But in this interaction, it can be argued that social dynamics and relations may be influenced as well, as Holloway and Hubbard (2001) suggest, regarding the reciprocity between people and place. The use of place-making also contributes to revealing everyday activities that construct place, which in the context of popular settlements are seen as highly relevant.

'The spaces around us everywhere, from the spaces in which we take shelter to those which we cut across and travel through, are part of our everyday social reality' (Madanipour 1999: 879). There is an increasing acceptance that the relationship between people and place is critical to understanding a space. The understanding of this relationship in its multiple forms is essential in urban design. People establish different links with spaces, from the most tangible and 'compulsory', such as using the space to go to school or work, or waiting for the bus (Gehl 1987) to the most intangible and symbolic, such as the meanings given to objects, events and appearances of the space (Madanipour 1996). In between, there is what we perceive with our senses and our cognition about the space, and how we experience the place. The former, the cognitive perception, involves making sense of an environment by gathering, organising and interpreting images and ideas of the space. (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003). While the latter – the experience of space – is related to the emotional bonds forged with it (Groat 1995). The experience of place is also related

to the identity of places and the identity of people with places, in general what some authors call the 'sense of place' (Relph 1976; 2009). The following sections will provide theoretical inputs to understanding each type of place construction.

2.5.2 Functional and Everyday Construction

It may be difficult to speak about the functions of open spaces because there is not a clear idea of what these might be: 'what a designer regards as the range of functions of an urban design is a political not an empirical question' (Lang 2007: 213). However, a possible way to consider this is to study human needs. But again, human needs are so broad, elusive and changing within different contexts and through different times, that it becomes impossible to apply a single method of explaining them. However, Maslow (cited in Lang 2007) identifies five sets of basic needs that may shed some light on the discussion. The most fundamental for Maslow are physiological and survival needs, which include the permanent need for oxygen, food, water, and also the need to sleep and to move around a territory. The other four are: safety and security needs, affiliative needs, the need for esteem, and self-actualization needs. Maslow also points out that cognitive and aesthetic requirements are often preliminary to meeting other needs: cognitive for understanding, learning and performing; and aesthetic for beauty and self-expression. These needs are not only about physiological dimensions, but are also related to social and cultural issues. Such issues are present in *barrio* open spaces and Maslow's hierarchy might help in understanding a part of their dynamics; for example the need for affiliation or self-expression.

On more specific functional aspects of open urban spaces Carr, Francis *et al*. (1992) also identify five characteristics that facilitate use: comfort, relaxation, passive engagement with the environment, active engagement with the environment and discovery. It can be said that good places frequently provide more than one of these characteristic attractions. Comfort is related to the length of time users spend in the space, and can be broken down into environmental, physical, social and psychological comfort. Relaxation is related to urban settings, natural elements, and

getting away from cars and traffic. Passive and active engagement are related to the chances of interaction with others; from people-watching as perhaps the first form of passive engagement, to actual contact and interaction with others. Discovery, too, is about the desire to seek out the new and the unexpected, and is related to variety and change. In addition to these, movement is one of the most important uses of open spaces: 'Movement is at the heart of the urban experience, an important factor in generating life and activity' (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 169). However, 'now, as before, facilitating the meeting between people is the most important collective function of the city' (Gehl 2007: 9).

Before exploring other ways of understanding open spaces, it is worth commenting on the perspective of everyday life, which is an alternative way to see the city 'with its spontaneity, difference and disorder' (Madanipour 1996: 73). 'The everyday life perspective is a view from below, which "makes reality visible", [offering] new insights and possibilities for transcending the artificial gap between production and reproduction and to see existence as a whole' (The Research Group for the New Everyday Life, cited in Madanipour 1996: 73). Harvey (1996) adds: 'It is by way of a study of daily life that we can begin [upon] the task of theory construction'. In this respect De Certeau (1984) in 'The Practice of Everyday Life' analyses aspects of the social construction of space in terms of the improvisational and everyday use of the city in opposition to ideas and theories of urban planners and managers. His work also covers ideas of perception and semiotics, as well as being a reference for theories of everyday architecture and urbanism, topics that are of interest to this research, and which will be discussed later on.

2.5.3 Perception and Cognitive Construction

'People need links to the world, and some are provided by the spaces they inhabit and the activities occurring within these spaces' (Carr, Francis *et al*. 1992: 187). These links in the environment can be seen as 'mental constructs' in which the space is not directly understood but is appreciated through a complicated process of interpretation (Moore 1983) or given meanings that lead to connections that go

beyond the place itself (Appleyard 1979; Rapoport 1982). Therefore, the consumption of open spaces can be understood as a process by which the users endow it with meaning, ranging from more explicit and tangible ways, such as functional usage, to less tangible and more complex forms like perception and experiential and symbolic constructions. 'For a space to become meaningful...., a number of fundamental requirements must be met. First it must be 'legible', borrowing the term from Lynch's analyses' (Carr, Francis *et al*. 1992: 187). Legibility means that the environment can be understood by the users, and in this connection, Lynch 'aimed to identify aspects of the environment that left a strong image in the observers' minds' (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 89). Lynch (1963: 10) identified five physical elements of legibility: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks, that 'would invite the eye and ear to greater attention and participation'. This implies that the perception of places may contribute to building deeper relationships: 'Legibility and identity are interdependent. Spaces are formed by capital investment and sensual attachment' (Zukin 2000: 85).

But the environment is not only perceived through the senses – we have also 'cognitive representations' of it (Madanipour 1996: 63). People have different ideas about the same place, they decide how much they know and want to know about a place; and this understanding may change over time (Moore 1983). In this regard, Soja (2000) in his theory of the 'Thirdspace' refers to 'urban imaginaries' as 'our mental or cognitive mappings of urban reality and the interpretative grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live' (Soja 2000: 234). For Silva (1992) urban imaginaries are about how people construct images of urban space from their own imaginary creations. Therefore, the urban image is built upon both 'real' perception (through the senses) and 'imaginary' creation (through cognitive representations).

2.5.4 Experiential Construction

Although they have been separated in order to simplify the exploration of the social construction of space, the different approaches work intrinsically together. The

purely functional usages are closely related to experiences of space; while experiences themselves can be also regarded as uses of the space and vice-versa. Similarly, experiences are built upon perception and cognition, and undoubtedly relate to symbolism - all of these different manifestations together bestowing or developing meanings.

> *Each place is a territory of significance, distinguished from larger or smaller areas by its name, by its particular environmental qualities, by the stories and shared memories connected to it, and by the intensity of meanings people give or derive from it.* (Relph 2009: 24)

However, in this section the idea is to explore emotional links to places, the relation of people and the space in terms of affect (Thrift 2004), people's engagement with places and their 'consequences', for themselves and for the places. Among 'consequences to people' are territoriality, identity, attachment and belonging, which can be seen as expressions. On the other hand, 'consequences to places' in terms of personalisation and appropriation, are studied as manifestations. For Carmona, Heath *et al.* (2003: 97), the construction of place is about the sense of place and concepts of place, and includes 'the importance of a sense of belonging, of emotional attachment to place'. Relph (2009: 26) complements this with his remark that a 'sense of place lies primarily inside us, but is aroused by the landscapes [places] we encounter'.

The relationship between people and places is a two-way exchange, with places capable of contributing to building personal identities by a process of interaction with them, which allows people to be described in terms of belonging to a specific place (Proshansky, Fabian *et al*. 1983). People may, conversely, change places by means of personalisation (Carmona, Heath *et a*l. 2003) and appropriation (Jimenez Dominguez 2007). These two sets of concepts are closely related and frequently 'work' together; that is, where a place is appropriated, it may help in building individual and collective identities, and vice-versa. In the same respect, new concepts and refinements have appeared, including the study of the feelings that people develop towards significant places, derived from 'basic' territoriality and personalisation ideas (Hernandez and Hidalgo 2008). Territoriality can be understood as 'people's definition and defence of themselves – physically and physiologically – by the creation of a bounded, often exclusive domain' (Ardrey

cited in Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 97-98). While personalisation is about 'putting a distinctive stamp on one's environment... personalisation of elements visible from the public realm communicated these tastes to the wider community' (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 98).

Territoriality is associated with identity-building, both individually and collectively. Proshansky, Fabian *et al*. (1983: 60) describe the role place-identity plays in the development of people's sense of themselves, of their own personal identities: 'a potpourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings'. Again, with place-attachment: 'place attachment is an affective bond that people establish with specific areas where they prefer to remain and where they feel comfortable and safe' (Hernandez and Hidalgo 2008: abstract). And for Mazzoni and Cicognani (2008: abstract): 'attachment to specific places contributes to the development and preservation of an individual's identity and its disruption can cause sense of loss leading to negative effects for the community' Collectively, attachment and belonging can be understood as expressions for building up community identities, which may also contribute to developing a sense of community (Aragones and Amerigo 1998; Garcia, Giuliani *et al*. 1999; Mazzoni and Cicognani 2008).

Personalisation can also be seen as part of the appropriation of space. For Bassand (1990: 9), 'appropriation of space takes place when social actors take possession of a space according to their resources and their power in the social framework either of existing laws, rules and norms, or the laws, rules and norms they elaborate specifically for that purpose'. Jimenez Dominguez (2007) argues that appropriation is about social communication with the urban space, including urban culture and living memory. Personalisation and appropriation can be understood as mainly collective (but also potentially individual) tangible (physical) and intangible (attitudinal) responses to the places, that go beyond possession and could involve conflicts with authorities such as planners and the police.

Because places are largely defined in terms of people's experiences of them, 'successful public spaces are characterised by the presence of people, in an often self-reinforcing process' (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 99). It can be argued that

'identity of place' is to a large extent what people make of it. In this regard, Relph (1976: 61-62) distinguishes several types of place identity in relation to their users and whether they are insiders, outsiders, individuals or groups; and according to their attitudes and behaviours. 'The identity of place takes many forms, but it is always the very basis of our experience of *this* place as opposed to any other.'

2.6 Built Form and Language

2.6.1 Built Form and Popular Settlements

Many popular settlements are places of aspiration and change (Kellett 2009), where choice and representation can be observed. However, this view is not universally shared. Viviescas (1989) for example, referring only to functional aspects, argues that forms of expression in the *barrio* are just attempts to overcome poverty. He also considers that the idea of popular or informal architecture and urbanism is a fallacy, it is just a way of backing up the forces that promote the creation of these precarious settlements. However the evidence and discussion in the literature give a different impression: Brillembourg and Klumpner (2010) claim the presence of patterns and logic behind the 'sprawling and rhizome-like shapes' of the *barrios* of Caracas. Segre (2010) confirms inventiveness exhibited in the urban dimension of the *favelas,* linked to popular knowledge, and Lara (2010) argues that informal settlements have a formal architectural structure. It is argued that richness and creativity are found in popular settlements, confirming the existence of form and 'design language', 'an aesthetic of the *favela'* (Berenstein Jacques 2001). In this respect, further exploration of the built form in popular settlements is needed. There is a materiality in terms of urbanism and architecture in these places that can be observed, but not easily understood and interpreted. As explained earlier, the social production and construction of place provide important paths for exploration; for example, Harvey (1996) suggests that there is a reciprocal relationship between production and product, and Low (1996) argues that space is transformed through people's functional and symbolic interactions with it. Furthermore, the built form in popular settlements has to be understood within its context, as Pugh explains: 'It is clear that

squatter [informal] settlements and built form are simultaneously societal, cultural, economic, and architectural' (2000: 332).

The discussion then moves into understanding and interpreting this design language, along with its implied meanings. Approaches can be envisaged from the perspective of man-environment interactions, which can broadly be called socio-cultural phenomena (Rapoport 1976). In popular settlements, they are particularly significant because of the large extent of users' involvement in the production and transformation of their space. In other words, the role of culture affects and directly influences the production of the built form. Connected to this is the idea of considering popular settlements in terms of vernacular design (Rapoport 1988), which argues the similarities in process and product characteristics between traditional and informal environments. In this respect, Kellett and Napier (1995) suggest that informal settlements qualify as a special sub-type of vernacular, but argue that social and cultural context and constraints must be taken into consideration, as well as the relationship with the formal production of the built environment, in comparison with which these settlements are defined. Another approach, also connected to the earlier discussions, may be found in the idea of 'everyday life' (De Certeau 1984) which has been further developed into the 'architectural everyday' (Miles 2000), 'everyday public space' (Crawford 1995; Crawford 1999), and 'everyday aesthetics' (Mandoki 2001; 2007). These three approaches – culture, vernacular and everyday – will be further explored in the sections to come.

Might the foregoing explorations serve as the basis upon which to claim the existence of a 'popular architecture' in terms of an architectural style, with its own categories, codes and aesthetic values? Is it perhaps a design language that sometimes borrows its vocabulary from the dominant groups to which the informal dwellers aspire, as Kellett (2008) suggests? Possibly, as Carvajalino (2004) argues, it is about 'embellishment' or 'over-decoration' (*engalle*) as a way of expressing the values and desires of the people? However, in the end it is a language that deserves further study because it represents the stylistic environment of a large portion of the population: it is 'common' and built on an everyday basis. A further claim to attention is suggested by Fiori and Brandao (2010) who observe that informal

architecture and urbanism may contribute to the creation of cities of greater integrity, inclusion and diversity.

2.6.2 Culture and Built Form

It has been argued in the associated literature that there is a complex interrelationship between culture and built form. Rapoport (1988: 58) argues that 'in spontaneous [informal] settlements, as in vernacular settlements, the group of settlers is self-selected and generally attempts to create settings and elements that support components of culture regarded as important'. In his seminal work, 'House, Form and Culture' he states that 'the house [and settlement] form is not simply the result of physical forces or any single casual factor, but is the consequence of a whole range of socio-cultural factors' (Rapoport 1969: 47). Therefore, a crucial aspect is to know what is meant by culture. It is, however, a complex concept, and numerous definitions and interpretations are available. Rapoport (1976: 25) argues that culture is 'about a group of people who share a world view, beliefs, values, etc., which are learned and transmitted'. Furthermore, he offers three complementary conceptualizations to clarify it: a way of life typical of a group, a system of schemata transmitted symbolically and a way of coping with the ecological setting (Rapoport 1989).

Along the same lines, Bassand (1990) argues that each social group has its own culture, which includes values, aesthetics, emotions and tastes. If built form is closely related to culture, and culture is what a social group shares, then exploring the culture of a group can provide a basis for understanding /interpreting the built form and vice-versa. As will be further developed in the next section, this is especially important in informal settlements, where the input of the group in the production of the environment is higher than in other groups/environments (i.e. self-help and self-build practices as discussed earlier).

In this respect the exploration of the culture of informal settlers is central to this study. Garcia, Giuliani *et al*. in referring to Caracas' *barrios* dwellers, explain that these groups are:

> *[...] made up of associated individuals linked together with characteristics that are both unique and diverse... [implying] a confluence of values, norms, cultures and particular histories that must be understood from an integration perspective.* (Garcia, Giuliani *et al*. 1999: 729)

Other Latin American urban researchers such as Bolivar (1990), Avendaño and Carvajalino (2000) argue that informal settlers have created environments in line with their cultural expressions. Moreover, Ontiveros and De Freitas (2006) link these cultural expressions with a system of communally-shared meanings, mutual help, *barrio* solidarity and territorial identity. This 'way of doing things' (Rapoport 1988) is called by Garcia Canclini (1989) popular culture or '*lo popular'* (the popular). It corresponds with what was explained at the beginning of the chapter on informality (Palma 1988). Similarly to Palma, referring to informal economic practices, Garcia Canclini (2002) refers to popular cultural practices as alternatives to formal cultural expressions and as what Mandoki (2007) describes in terms of aesthetics as 'prosaics' (everyday aesthetics), in opposition to 'poetics' (elite and formal aesthetics). However, '*lo popular'* is also associated with traditional expressions and provincial beliefs, and also with cultural manifestations shared by the majority of the people, '*el pueblo'* (Garcia Canclini 2002). In this respect, Garcia Canclini argues that popular culture is a mixture of traditional customs and beliefs from a pre-modern and rural context with the global and industrial tendencies of a modern and urban context. He defends the idea that Latin American expressiveness is built upon the modern and the pre-modern, the local and the global, in a sort of cultural hybridization.

2.6.3 Vernacular Settlements

Can informal settlements be considered shelter or architecture? Meaning whether the built environment corresponds only to practical actions people undertake to overcome poverty (Viviescas, Gomez *et al*. 1989) or if there is choice and representation (Klaufus 2000) in the materiality observed in the *barrios*. Kellett and Napier (1995) conclude that there is evidence to think that the latter is true, which

may serve to help in understanding these settlements as near vernacular environments.

The term ‘vernacular’ was first used in the 1860s in direct reference to building activities which ‘displayed the characteristics of houses built by people who took into consideration their requirements, societal conditions, environmental factors and materials’ (Turan 1990: VII). Since that time, and with pioneering works such as Bernard Rudofsky’s ‘Architecture without Architects’ and Paul Oliver’s ‘Shelter and Society’ (1969), the concept has been further developed. Oliver proposes a definition that can be taken as a framework for studying the subject:

> *Vernacular architecture comprises the dwellings and all other buildings of the people. Related to their environmental contexts and available resources, they are customarily owner- or community-built, utilizing traditional technologies. All forms of vernacular are built to meet specific needs, accommodating the values, economies and ways of living of the cultures that produce them.* (Oliver 1997; 2006: 30)

The question arises as to what extent vernacular architecture and settlements - can enrich the understanding of informal settlements. From Oliver’s definition, several elements appear to be similar to what can be found in informal settlements: the context-relationship, availability of resources, prevalence of self-build, traditional technologies – all meeting specific needs and cultural orientations. In this regard, Rapoport (1988: 72) compares the characteristics of vernacular and informal settlements in terms of process and product, coming to the conclusion that informal settlements:

> *[...] work well culturally and aesthetically [...], vastly superior in terms of cultural supportiveness and perceptual quality than designers working in the same places [...], frequently comparable in quality to those of traditional vernacular, many aspects of which professional designers admire.*

However, these conclusions have been challenged, by for example Kellett and Napier (1995: 12), who argue that they are ‘both too general and premature given the extensive variety and lack of detailed empirical evidence about the built form, of informal settlements’. They agree on the similarities found in both types of environments, and on the cultural and aesthetic richness found in informal

settlements, but with the proviso that special care needs to be taken in order to avoid romanticizing these environments and overlooking their deficiencies and the difficulties with which they are created. Vernacular settlements can provide a framework within which to analyse the built form of open spaces in informal settlements – 'architectural expression which can undeniably exist' (Kellett and Napier 1995: 22), while avoiding the association purely with poverty and constraints. It may also be useful to explore the 'underlying rules of order' or the 'transition from one mode of production to another' (Stea and Turan 1990) that these settlements exhibit.

2.6.4 Everyday Architecture

Closely connected to the above-explained ideas in terms of cultural context and the social production and construction of space, are ideas of everyday practices. De Certeau (1984: XIV) explains the procedures of everyday creativity as the 'ways of operating [...], in which users re-appropriate the space organized by techniques of socio-cultural production'. For De Certeau (1984: XIV-XV), everyday practices can 'bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical and make-shift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of 'discipline' Certeau invites us to see the city from below, from the walker's point of view: he 'conceives the everyday as different from the official in the same way that poetry is other to a planning manual' (editor's introduction in De Certeau 1993). These ideas may help towards understanding the dynamics of popular settlements, where everyday acts give shape to the built environment, acts which are sometimes overlooked by the formal way of seeing the city.

Ideas of the everyday have developed in architecture and urbanism as the 'architectural everyday,' 'everyday public space' and 'everyday aesthetics', all of them focussing on the role of dwellers in the determination of what constitutes their public and private spaces. In this respect, these ideas are closely related to social production of space, specifically to participation and people's involvement in the creation of the built environment. For Miles, the architectural everyday is broader

than community architecture,[5] because it covers informal settlements, appropriation of the built environment, and the ephemeral; and it 'recognises, in contrast to modernist utopianism and community architecture's enthusiasm, a contended and perhaps unresolvable complexity in the determination of urban futures, both built and social' (Miles 2000: 154). The architectural everyday is the everyday spatial practices of the people who make use of the city, and it can also be linked to appropriation and identity. Closely related to ideas of everyday spatial practices, Crawford (1999: 28) defines 'everyday public space' as one containing 'multiple and constantly shifting meanings rather than clarity of function. In the absence of a distinct identity of their own, these spaces can be shaped and redefined by the transitory activities they accommodate'.

Concerning the expressiveness of everyday practices, ideas of everyday aesthetics can be found to be helpful. For Mandoki (2007) it is necessary to open up aesthetics towards the wealth and complexity of everyday life and its manifestations, in what she calls Prosaics. She believes 'all things are aesthetic', in terms that they are closely related to experience, without 'necessarily implying any relation to beauty or pleasure [...] Prosaics is concerned both with aesthetic mechanisms and with their effects upon sensibility' (Mandoki 2007: 74). Everyday aesthetics can offer paths to understanding the production and construction of open spaces in informal settlements, and the expressiveness and sensibility that these urban environments display.

2.7 Conclusions

This chapter has examined existing literature on the themes of this research. Firstly, theoretical and practical approaches to popular settlements were discussed, concluding that these settlements are a fundamental part of the urbanisation process of Latin America, and the involvement of the people in the creation and transformation of these environments is perhaps their most important characteristic. The potential of these settlements for the construction of the city and to meet

[5] For more on community architecture see Wates and Knevitt (1987) and Hernandez (1991).

people's needs was also discussed; however, the risk of romanticizing them needs to be avoided and people's struggles as well as the deficiencies of their housing and urban facilities must also be included in the picture. Secondly, theories and concepts of open spaces were developed, pointing out the relative lack of research on open spaces in popular settlements. This section also discussed the importance of open spaces within the *barrio,* and their role in the urban and social dynamics of *barrios*. It finally addressed the issue of naming and characterising them in the terms of the existing literature. The term 'open spaces' rather than 'public spaces' is preferred, because while these spaces are public in terms of ownership and accessibility, with regard to their use and appropriation, they are more akin to communal and private.

Thirdly, the social production of space was examined, as was the creation and transformation of space and the different political, social, cultural and economic forces that may be involved. In popular settlements the production of space is largely undertaken by the people themselves by means of organised participation or informal involvement processes, which are part of the dynamics of the *barrios*. The social production of space is closely related to its social construction, which is the subject of the fourth section. This is an especially rich dimension because it explores the different ways by which people relate to or construct space in their use of places. But functional or tangible uses form just one of the possible ways in which people relate to places, and there are others that are equally or even more important. Among these uses are the perceptual, the cognitive, the experiential and the symbolic. Lastly, literature on built form and language in popular settlements was examined. Three approaches were explored: the role of culture in the creation and transformation of built form, ideas of vernacular settlements and architecture, everyday architecture, public space and aesthetics. These approaches suggest the existence of a 'popular architecture and urbanism' closely related to the social production and construction of space, and also linked to appropriation, identity and specific aesthetic values.

Drawing on this conceptual framework, which attempts to identify and explore the key themes related to open spaces in popular settlements, the study will examine the processes of production and consumption of these *barrio* urban areas and their design language and associated meanings. The following chapter describes how this will be approached.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses how the methodology for the research was designed, and aims to explain the decisions about how to explore the production and consumption practices of open spaces. The chapter is structured in five parts. The first part explains the choice of a qualitative methodology and of the case study approach as the main tools to help answer the research questions. The second part concerns the research strategy and settings, explaining the decision to use an extended database of nearly 60 cases collected in previous studies, as well as the fieldwork approach developed to deepen knowledge in six case studies. This part ends with an explanation of the stages of the research, focusing on the fieldwork undertaken in Bogotá. The third part discusses the methods used for data collection both for the general cases and – especially – for the six case studies. Part four deals with data analysis and interpretation approaches and tools, while part five offers a reflection on the methodology and on ethical issues. Finally, the chapter closes with some remarks on the methodological process and the outcomes obtained.

3.2 Research Methodology and Approach

3.2.1 Qualitative Methodology

Production, transformation, consumption and language are the key subjects of enquiry, the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions forming the main methods of developing the research. How are open spaces constructed and given meaning by local people, and why are they developed in such a way? Is this a question of a ‘survival’ approach, as some authors suggest, or of something more? Is it possible to identify in such places choice, interpretation and the expression of social and cultural backgrounds and practices? To summarise, the research is focused upon social practices and perceptions, and this suggests that the most appropriate methodology would be a qualitative one.

‘Qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables’ (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 12). A qualitative methodological approach is about exploring people’s perceptions and experiences. It also has the potential to capture the complexity of place as a socio-spatial concept (Holloway and Hubbard 2001). People’s experiences and perceptions in relation to their open spaces are at the centre of interest of this research, as well as exploring the meanings that this relationship may convey. Seen in this light, a qualitative approach looks to be the most appropriate for this research. Moreover, this approach helps to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, going beyond descriptions and facts. Therefore, it is not about applying ready-made theories to people, rather it is about validating people’s thoughts and practices through contributions to theory. In this sense, listening to people’s voices is crucial: ‘We must [...] become keener listeners to these “ordinary” voices if, as researchers, we wish to understand the complex processes and motivations involved’ (Kellett 2000: 203). Miles and Huberman (1994) summarize the key features of a qualitative research, starting by stating that research requires an intense contact with the field by means of any or a combination of various research methods, such as observation, interviews, ethnography and so on.

> *The researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors ‘from inside’, through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding, and of suspending or “bracketing” preconceptions about the topics under discussion.* (Miles and Huberman 1994: 6)

The objective is to gain a ‘holistic’ approach to the situation, both in explicit and implicit terms. Once the data has been collected, the task is to understand and make sense of it within the particular context; association and interpretation tools are then required and theoretical inputs are crucial. However, the researcher and her/his own words are the sole instruments of analysis; the researcher being the ‘measurement device’ and their words and thoughts being ‘organized to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyze, and bestow patterns’ (Miles and Huberman 1994: 6-7).

A qualitative methodology provides the appropriate framework and tools to develop this research. It also allows the opportunity to incorporate knowledge and experience

gathered from an ‘intense and prolonged’ contact with the field of study over nearly 20 years of research and engagement with people in these settlements and beyond.

3.2.2 Case Study Approach

The reasons for using a case study approach are related to the way Yin (2003: 1) characterizes them:

> *In general case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control of the events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.*

Additionally, understanding case studies as ‘containers’, ‘frames’ with boundaries - spatial, temporal, processual or conceptual (Murakami Wood 2008) - matches conveniently with the situation and objectives of the research. The approach also permits a close relationship with the participants, and is amenable to answering the kinds of questions planned. Case studies, as discussed by Flyvbjerg (2006), offer a number of possibilities which are appropriate to this research. First, the case study is a context-dependent approach, pursuing practical knowledge on an equal footing with theoretical knowledge. It creates expertise in a subject, very important to understanding the complexity of social research, and in particular the physical and social dynamics of popular settlements. Second, the case study is not about sampling, that is, it is not possible from a single case to draw conclusions that can be applied to a larger universe. However, it is not an objective of this research to establish generalisations, but to critically discuss understandings of these settlements and explore their potential implications. Third, case studies can be used at all stages of research and for different purposes. They can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory, and they can be based on single or multiple cases (Yin 2003a). In this research, cases are used both to explore and describe open spaces in the *barrios*, and to explain the relationship between them and the residents. Fourth, case studies allow other voices to be heard, beyond the researcher’s own, and in this context people’s experiences and thoughts can be neatly conveyed. And fifth, it is said that case studies are difficult to summarise. This is not seen as problematic because

descriptions can be said to speak for themselves in portraying the complexities and ambiguities of the subject, and in this way afford an additional gain to the research.

Case studies are a suitable approach to developing this research, not only for the reasons laid out above, but also because they permit the incorporation of other cases previously explored by the researcher. In the end, the study argument will be constructed upon a relatively large evidence base, consisting of cases and data collected since 2003, along with the six selected case studies that were the subject of detailed fieldwork during the course of this research. The 'general' cases furnish a broad understanding of the topic on the one hand, and provide material for discovering tendencies and comparisons on the other. The 'specific' cases, however, offer more detailed information which may help to explain the reasons behind the facts and tendencies identified and support in constructing the arguments.

3.3 Research Settings

3.3.1 Popular Settlements in Bogotá

In the first stages of the research process, one question preoccupied the researcher above all others: how could knowledge and understanding of popular settlements gained over several years be incorporated into the study, and at the same time produce something new? With this in mind, and after careful revision of the data gathered during previous empirical investigations and discussions with the supervisory team, a way forward was arrived upon. The doctoral research seemed a good opportunity to reflect upon past experience, to enhance understanding with new and updated literature and to explore new subjects in relation to popular settlements. Against this background, two main decisions were made – to situate the research in Bogotá, and to use some of the previously-collected data alongside new material to be gathered for the purpose of this research.

There were several reasons for setting the research in Bogotá. First, for the practical reasons referred to earlier: it was the location of prior studies undertaken by the researcher, and data was already available. This connects with the second major point, which concerns the knowledge and understanding that have been built up over the course of several years of exposure to, and reflection on, popular settlements in Bogotá. This was thought to be beneficial in deepening the analysis and enhancing the interpretation of findings and arguments. The third reason was the large scale of informal settlement in Bogotá, which is both Colombia's largest city, and has more than 50% of its area given over to popular settlements. Because of this, Bogotá's *barrios* have also been the subject of several studies; however, such is the scale of the settlements, that the scope of the prior investigations still leaves room to improve the understanding of them, especially in terms of urban space, as this thesis argues.

This doctoral research is therefore based upon 57 empirical cases undertaken from 2003 to 2007 in Bogotá, and six cases selected from these for more detailed examination in the course of the fieldwork undertaken at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009. Both types of case will be introduced in the following sections.

3.3.2 The 'General' Cases

The 'general' cases selection was part of the research work undertaken since 2003:

Table 3.1: Research work 2003 - 2007

Title[6]	Objectives
'Local initiatives in urban and environmental upgrading in Popular Habitat sectors. OSP and OPC programmes. (Hernandez 2007)	• To analyse and compare results of the programmes: 'Pedagogical Outcome Works' (OSP) and 'Citizen Participation Works' (OPC). • To make recommendations for improvements to the OPC.
'Community participation in peripheral Popular Habitat. A view from social aesthetics' (Hernandez 2006)	• To analyse how local people in informal settlements shape/transform their urban space. • To identify the pros and cons of such initiatives.

[6] Short title versions. Original and full titles in Spanish (see references).

'Popular Habitat in Usme. A study on participation, popular organization and local initiative' (Hernandez, Losada *et al*. 2004)	• To study projects on urban space transformation and upgrading in Usme District, comparing community and governmental approaches.
'Poverty, environment and quality of life in informal settlements in: Bogotá, Popayán, and Bucaramanga' (Hernandez, Jaramillo *et al*. 2003)	• To improve understanding of informal settlements in Colombian cities. • To identify relationships between urban poverty and urban environmental quality.

Nearly 80 cases were covered in these studies, and most were located in Bogotá. For this research 57 were eventually selected, on the basis of having more robust data, and also of representing a spread of different topics concerning open spaces, and being located in different parts of the city. The cases show a good range of alternatives in terms of location, origins, use, morphology, stage of consolidation and so on, which also confirms the variety within popular settlements and their open spaces. These 'general' cases aim to explore open spaces in popular settlements in Bogotá, and can be used to discuss their similarities and differences, as well as providing a framework for the detailed case studies. They will also contribute to the general discussion and will enrich the argument on production and consumption of open spaces that this study seeks to make.

3.3.3 The Six Case Studies

The selection of the six case studies was conducted using a survey process from among the general cases; and was oriented by the research questions on production, consumption, and design language and meaning. The main consideration was that the number of case studies used should be adequate for exploring the different research topics, as well as for exhibiting the diversity of open spaces. It was also important that each case speak for itself; in other words that it should stand out with sufficient clarity and show the richness, multiplicity and possibilities of open spaces in the *barrios*. Practical issues were also taken into consideration in choosing the cases: accessibility, contacts and the availability of documents and maps. A final concern was to select a range of cases in terms of settlement open space origin, size, morphology and location. An initial list of 20 possible cases was gradually narrowed down to ten. Then, in Bogotá, as part of the fieldwork, visits were made to the ten cases and decisions about inclusion were taken.

Once again, topical and practical considerations came into play when making a final decision about case selection. These were, first, that the research questions could be appropriately addressed in the chosen cases, and second, that cases could be conveniently approached in terms of accessibility, contacts and information. Six cases were identified, which displayed the characteristics considered important to help to reflect on the research questions and to show the diversity of open spaces in the *barrios*. The cases selected are from different areas of the south east and west peripheries of Bogotá, where most informal settlements are located. About the position of the open spaces within the *barrio*, the cases show the different approaches, some are central and some are peripheral. The settlements' origins are also in concordance to what is found in the city: 'pirate' urbanisations, land invasions, site-and-services public projects and individual plot development (further explanation in 4.2.2). Regarding stage of consolidation of the settlement and their open spaces, the cases show the range commonly found, from early stages to relatively well consolidated. However, early stage settlements (recently 'occupied' or purchased from an illegal developer) were not considered, because the first efforts are only put into the housing and basic settlement organisation, including 'self connected' public services. The origin and stage of consolidation of the open spaces were another criteria to select the cases, aiming to have different possibilities, different actors involved in the process, and different outcomes. These data were used to develop the arguments of chapter 5 referring to the first research question. Another important feature was about the use of open spaces: the cases illustrate different functional and symbolic uses, and connect directly with the objective of the second research question developed in chapter 6. Different morphologies and design language of open spaces are other characteristics the cases display quite explicitly, confirming the multiplicity of geometries, boundaries and physical diversity, in general. Chapter 7, which explores the third research question, makes good use of these data to elaborate the arguments. The cases selected, which will be explained in chapter 4, are:

1. Parque Danubio (Danubio Park)
2. Parque Los Cerezos (Los Cerezos Park)
3. Parque Villa Sonia (Villa Sonia Park)

4. Parque Nueva Argentina (Nueva Argentina Park)
5. Parques de La Andrea (La Andrea Parks)
6. Parques de Aguas Claras (Aguas Claras Parks)

3.3.4 Research Steps and Fieldwork

The research was conducted in five phases. The first phase was carried out before the formal start point of the research: as explained earlier, it included data collected from a number of prior studies, and was also relevant for the organisation of the case study data and analysis. The other four phases were: planning and literature review; fieldwork; analysis; and writing. The fieldwork phase took place within specific time limits, but the other research phases ran more or less concurrently. The literature was developed and revised throughout the course of the research, as was the study plan, which not only helped to inform early decisions but also contributed to defining the study's ultimate orientation and arguments. The analytical and critical perspectives were deployed from the initial discussions onwards, and fed back into each process of the research. The writing was not only an end in itself but also a means of conducting the research, since throughout the early stages writing themes were revised, decisions were taken and arguments were constructed and written down. In more specific terms, the first steps of the planning phase were when the research proposal was considered and refined, the main part of the literature review was undertaken, previously-collected data was checked against quality and research criteria, the fieldwork phase was planned and a pilot study was developed. The pilot study was carried out in order to test the methods to be used in the fieldwork. Owing to time and budget restrictions, the pilot was accomplished in an open space in Newcastle. A square opening into the city and within the grounds of Newcastle University was selected, and the study took the form of observations undertaken at two or three time points each day and evening, over the course of a week. The pilot was useful in furnishing a better understanding of how the methods work 'in action', and in allowing the necessary corrections to be made to the tools to be employed, in particular, the interview guidelines and the mapping formats.

The fieldwork was undertaken in Bogotá during November and December 2008, and January 2009. In common with many other researchers' experiences, things did not develop according to the carefully laid plans, and amendments had to be made in the field. The first part of the fieldwork was about exploring the sample of ten case study spaces initially selected and evaluating them according to their suitability for inclusion. Also, the first weeks were devoted to visiting some of the general cases, making new contacts and confirming old ones, talking informally to people in the *barrios*, and refining the fieldwork plans accordingly. During this period, an assistant was hired to help with the general organization, but also to help to prepare the paper work, maps, drawings and interview forms. Ligia Bautista is an architect and a former student of the researcher at the Javeriana University in Bogotá. Ligia also helped with the interviews, the mapping and the observations. As Kellett (1995: 80) points out: 'It was found that having two people was very effective during interviews: one could concentrate on asking the questions and listening, whilst the other made notes [and recorded]'. Another paid helper was Rocio Garcia, a community leader from the Aguas Claras *barrio* (one of the case studies). Rocio started later than Ligia, towards the middle of the data-collecting stage, and helped with some of the interviews and observations. Rocio's participation proved very interesting, because of her particular perspective (from a community leader's point of view) and her excellent communication skills with people of the *barrios*. Both Ligia and Rocio remained in contact after the data collection period, and continued to support the researcher with information, ideas and comments.[7]

3.4 Fieldwork Data Collection

3.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews, Unstructured Discussions and Unstructured Interviews

Multiple methods for fieldwork data-collection were employed. These can be grouped into three types: interviews; observations; and visual and documentary

[7] An additional benefit of Rocio's participation was gained through learning from her. As a community leader, she has contributed approaches and ideas worthy of consideration. A degree of reciprocity was also possible, whereby the researcher taught Rocio how to open an email account, along with the basics of sending and receiving emails.

modes. The latter were selected because they could help with exploring relationships between people and places, the overall objective of this study. Interviews helped with investigating personal experiences and ideas of place, as well as with underlying meanings, while observations and graphic and written records contributed to the exploration of places in relation to people's consumption practices. In this regard, the methods complemented each other, and in practical terms they were carried out simultaneously with visits to the open spaces of *barrios.* However, interviews were perhaps the most influential single method used, because of the centrality of people's ideas and experiences to this research. The interviews also worked well with the research approach employed as: 'one of the most important sources of case study information is the interview' (Yin 2003: 89). Furthermore, interviews have been central to qualitative approaches, and good questions 'enhance the discovery of new knowledge', and 'enable the researcher to probe, develop provisional answers, think outside the box and become acquainted with the data' (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 69).

Four different types of interviews were used: semi-structured with key community actors, unstructured discussions with residents, unstructured interviews with key municipality staff and academics and casual conversations in the *barrios*. All provided material that was valuable in understanding the themes of this research, and in practical terms, they offered insights into different subjects at different levels, and they were used also to enrich and complement each other. For example, unstructured discussions with residents provided important topics that could be addressed with key community actors or municipality staff, which had not been initially identified. Similarly, themes touched upon in the unstructured interviews helped to fuel conversations in streets and parks.

Semi-structured interviews with key community actors

Rubin and Rubin (1995) argue that semi–structured interviews are about having a list of themes and questions to be covered, though these may vary from interview to interview. The idea is to have a 'consistent line of enquiry' according to the research objectives, but allowing the question-stream 'to be fluid rather than rigid' and to accommodate to the specific and changing context found (Yin 2003). Questions were grouped according to five themes: first, personal, family and *barrio* information

(including open spaces and *barrio* stories); second, questions on the production and transformation of the open space; third, questions on the use and consumption of place; fourth, questions on what the place represented for individuals and the community, including issues on design language and aesthetics; and fifth, an open question to accommodate any additional issues raised by the interviewer or the interviewee (see appendix 1). Depending on how the interview was progressing and time available, photo-elicitation was included as the final part of the session (see photo-elicitation explanation in 3.4.3), which on many occasions opened up a new round of conversation.

Twenty-nine semi-structured interviews were carried out (appendix 2). Key community actors were identified in each case study, among them current and former members of the Communal Action Groups (JAC) (see chapter 4) who played a significant role in the production of the open space; *barrio* founders who could tell the history of the place; people who were or are actively involved in the production and transformation of the open space; and people who had a special interest in the place because, for example, they had a business (a '*tienda*'). All interviews were conducted in Spanish, however issues arose when translating responses into English and in analysing the data collected in general. Although it had been intended that all the interviews would be audio-recorded, it was quickly noted that not everybody felt comfortable with this, and in addition the fluidity of the conversation was somehow lost. In such cases, the recorder was not used and instead written notes were taken by the researcher and assistants.

Unstructured discussions with residents

Unstructured discussions were held to further explore the research themes and talk to as many residents as possible. The respondents were selected on casual basis among residents of the *barrios,* and most of these discussions were carried out at the same time as observations and mapping exercises were underway. All the respondents were present in the open spaces or in the adjacent '*tiendas*' during the interviews. The discussions were open-ended and conversational in tone and followed a summarised version of the relevant interview guidelines (appendix 3); however, each generated its own dynamics, in terms of both issues discussed and time spent. Notes of 36 discussions were taken across the six case studies.

Unstructured interviews with key municipality officials and academics

Eleven unstructured interviews were carried out with key actors from the municipality and academia. There were no predetermined questions, and in the case of municipality officials, the interview was meant to enquire about the role of public bodies in open spaces, as well as to explore their own opinions on the matter. Most of the municipality offices approached had a direct responsibility for urban development and facilities in the *barrios*, such as the '*Secretaria del Habitat'* (Habitat Secretary) or '*La Caja de la Vivienda Popular*' (Popular Housing Office), and for open spaces improvement, as the '*Instituto Distrital para la Participacion Ciudadana*' (Participation and Communal Action Municipal Institute*)* or '*El Instituto para La recreacion y el deporte'* (Municipal Recreation and Sports Institute); see appendix 4 for a list of staff interviewed and their affiliation. For more information on municipality offices, refer to chapter four. In the case of academics (see also appendix 4), their knowledge and experience were important for developing an understanding of the issues for this research. Interviews were open-ended, and embodied interesting reflections on policies affecting formal settlements, open spaces, urban and public space policies, and the role of academia in supporting social and built environment processes in the *barrios.*

Besides yielding important contents in terms of data, carrying out the interviews taught me interesting lessons. For example, with regard to recording, not all participants were willing to participate as I had expected. At the same time others were possibly over-enthusiastic and appeared almost to be acting up for benefit of the microphone, paying more attention to how they were delivering their lines, rather than to what they were saying. As explained earlier, note-taking was necessary for some interviews, and this was generally found to enrich the process and gave the conversations fluidity. Contacting and talking to people was generally straightforward; for one thing, the contact information from the researcher's previous studies was in most cases still valid and it was easy to pursue fresh contacts arising from these earlier ones. For another thing, people were largely eager to discuss their *barrio* at some length, to the degree that it was sometimes necessary to discreetly curtail the exchange without engendering offence. Another positive aspect was the presence in most interviews of one of the two assistants, Ligia and Rocio. They were

not just present but also actively involved, their comments enriching the process and their presence helping in the communication with many of the female participants.[8] This was especially the case with Rocio, who as explained earlier, is a resident of one of the *barrios* studied (Aguas Claras); thus the initial contact with interviewees was more comfortable for both sides.

3.4.2 Observation and Mapping

Observation is about watching 'behaviours or environmental conditions' (Yin 2003: 93) and it involves 'systematic observation, recording, description, analysis and interpretation of people's behaviour' (Saunders, Lewis *et al*. 2007: 282). With regard to mapping, this 'is used in the behavioural sciences to study people's relationship to the environment, including how they imagine it to be and how they use it' (Sommer and Sommer 1997: 60). Observation and mapping complement each other, and they are to a certain extent similar; however, observing and mapping differ in the way that they record information, and therefore the respective foci of these methods differ. Observation is more open-ended, while mapping is more focused on the interaction between people and place. In this research study, both are used simultaneously and with the intention that they should be complementary.

Fifty-three observations and mapping exercises were undertaken (appendix 5). They were organized to cover weekdays and weekends alike, and mornings, afternoons and evenings whenever possible. Some of these observations were intentionally matched with community events in the open spaces, such as football meetings (very popular in the *barrios* '*canchas*' or parks) or communal gatherings. In all cases, observations were focused on the characteristics of the place and people's interactions with it, trying to identify the special features in each case (see observation themes in Table 3.2). Observations were recorded in a notebook, in which notes and comments on the topics observed, general information on the prevailing conditions, the time and any special features were also included. These

[8] Similarly, as Kellett (1995: 80) found on the north coast of Colombia: 'The presence of a woman was also believed to be positive, especially as many of the respondents were women.'

also helped to contextualise the mapping exercises, and contributed to a better subsequent understanding of the data.

Table 3.2: Observation themes

Observation Themes
Characteristics of the open space, including the surrounding buildings
Characteristics of the people using the space; including age, gender, origin and so on.
Use of the space
Special features of the space in terms of use and design language
Landmarks, symbols, and meaning 'containers'
Interaction of people with the space, including transformation, decoration, maintenance, and so on
Interaction between people, buildings and space: building–open space relationship

For the mapping exercise, following Goličnik's (2004) guidelines, a set of four maps was used for each space, in order to explore people's activities in the space, and record those activities for specific locations within it. Table 3.3 shows the topics explored with each map:

Table 3.3: Map topics for the mapping exercise

Maps	**Topics**
Map 1	Activities and duration
Map 2	Gender and age of the space-users
Map 3	Movement within and through the space
Map 4	Interactions with surrounding buildings

Notes, schematic drawings and photos accompanied the map records, and these were also used to complement the structured observations. The duration of each observation and mapping exercise varied, some of them being of relatively brief duration, because there was not much happening at that time; others, however, took an hour or more, for the opposite reason. The mapping exercise was intended to explore the existence or otherwise of patterns within the open space in terms of activities, daily and hourly use (that is, it was noted when their usage differed more or less systematically between weekdays and weekends, and between mornings, afternoons and evenings). This exercise also observed gender, age, movement direction and interaction with buildings. Subsequently, this data could inform the interviews and discussions, with the aim of eliciting people's ideas and perceptions on the spaces, and generating explanations of the relationship between people and

place. Figure 3.1 shows an example of a mapping exercise carried out on the 13 December 2008, starting at 11:50am, in the 'Los Cerezos' park:

Figure 3.1: Mapping exercise in Los Cerezos

Top right: map 1 which includes notes of activities and duration, date and the time; top left: map 2 which notes gender, ages and location of the users; bottom right: map 3 which notes circulation within and through the space; and bottom left: map 4 which records interactions with the surrounding buildings.

Alongside the unstructured discussions, 'unstructured' observations were carried out. These were made either to complement the structured observations, or in sites adjacent to the open spaces studied, or to take advantage of 'events'. Some consisted of quick notes, which contributed to enriching the understanding of the use of open spaces in the *barrios* and their dynamics. Also noteworthy is the role played by Rocio or Ligia who, as in the interviews, accompanied me in some of the observations and mapping exercises. They assisted in various practical matters, and created some of the observation records. Finally, as the observations were developed in parallel with the interviews, it was possible to introduce new themes or broach particular ideas reciprocally.

3.4.3 Visual Methods and Documentary Sources

Visual methods and documentary sources were intended both to complement the above-described methods, and also to provide a separate strand of data in themselves. The visual methods used included photographic survey and photo-elicitation, while the documentary methods included municipal maps and aerial photographs, relevant policies and reports on public programmes. Relevant newspaper articles and announcements were also collected, both from printed and online versions. Regarding the latter, it is of interest to note their availability throughout the whole research process, as was the opportunity of e-mail communication with some of the interviewees, through which it was possible to keep up with events as well as to seek clarification and additional information where necessary.

Photo survey

The photographs were taken not only to illustrate particular issues, but also to explore how 'life looks in particular times and places' where 'the images themselves provide a kind of information that is difficult to represent in text alone' (Wagner 2007: 47). The intention was to use them as an 'independent specimen of data' and 'integrate them [to the research] to provide more explanatory power' (Gaber and Gaber 2004: 223 and 235). Photographs were taken throughout the study duration

and used concurrently with the methods outlined above. It was also possible to compare some photographs with those taken in previous years in the same areas, providing in some cases interesting information for further analysis and interpretation. Photographs contributed to the enquiry process, and in most cases they were well received by the participants. However, for some individuals and in some situations, the use of the camera was restricted, owing to sensitivities regarding who might see those photos. This was the case especially with teenagers, who were afraid the images could end up with the police or with rival gangs.

Photo-elicitation

Photo-elicitation was employed within the interviews 'to invoke comments, memory and discussion in the course of an interview' (Hernandez Bonilla 2004: 88). 'Photo elicitation mines deeper into a different part of human consciousness than do words alone interviews' (Harper 2002: 23). In the case of this research, photographs from other open spaces in Bogotá were used, taken both in popular settlements and more affluent areas. The method worked only partially: for some interviews it gave inspiration and a dynamic to the process, but for others it seemed like an unnecessary distraction. In cases where the method worked, for example with the interviews of Danubio residents Jose and Lucy, the photos shown by the researcher not only stimulated new comments and ideas, but also encouraged the interviewees to share their own photos of the processes in the park. In other cases where photographs were presented, there was no discernible reaction, or they appeared more in the guise of a distraction. In such situations the researcher responded by dropping this approach and continuing with the interview. 'Unlike many research methods, photo elicitation works (or does not) for rather mysterious reasons'(Harper 2002: 22).

Documents and maps

A wide range of documents was consulted before, during and after the fieldwork regarding policies, plans and programmes aimed at popular settlements in Bogotá. Most of them are oriented towards housing issues and to a certain extent regard ways of 'formalising' informal settlements. However, they yielded little information regarding open spaces in the *barrios*. Among other types of document available to the researcher were the reports of NGOs and JAC which addressed *barrio* stories and

projects, planned or realised. The collection of *barrio* documents and research reports prepared by the NGO '*Barrio Taller'*, and the history of the *barrio el Danubio* prepared by the Danubio's JAC are good examples. Most of the documents consulted were available online. Regarding maps, the most recent digital version for Bogotá, dated 2007, was obtained, and was useful in locating all the cases. Google maps were also used as a quick tool for consulting and visualisation. However, in all cases the information found in the maps did not exactly correspond with that found in the field, confirming that these settlements are still growing and transforming. Aerial maps represented another graphic source and permitted a comparison between shots from the 1980s when most of the studied *barrios* were forming, and the 2000's, which is the latest information available. The scale and degree of photographic resolution ruled out detailed analysis; however, it was clearly observable where development had taken place in large areas of the city in the space of the last 20 years, including the areas of the case studies (see a full list of maps and aerial photographs in appendix 6).

3.5 Analysis and Interpretation

Analysing two sets of data - the general cases and the detailed case studies - and combining them to produce meaningful results was a major methodological challenge. Additional complexities arose from the different period and objectives of the data collection phases in the two types of study. However, circumstances could also be regarded as strengths of the study because they offered the chance of viewing the subject across 57 different cases, and of examining it in detail through six case studies. The time-span also provided tools for further interpretation. Initially, the analyses of the general cases and the case studies were treated separately. For the detailed case studies, qualitative tools were used; while for the general cases some simple counting techniques were deployed for descriptive and exploratory purposes, besides some qualitative tools. However, general and specific cases were governed by the same objectives, so that while the general cases provided broad understandings and explanations, specific cases investigated the research themes in detail. A mainly inductive approach was used, for both the general and the specific

cases, in order to allow the data to speak for itself and the concepts to be 'raised to a higher level of abstraction, and their interrelationships [to be] then traced out' (Punch 2005: 196). However, a deductive frame was also used in order to organize the research, direct the data collection and develop some working hypotheses (Yin 2003) in 'a series of alternating inductive and deductive steps' (Punch 2005: 196).

The first step in analysing the general cases was to study them thoroughly and become familiar with features and patterns. A list with the main characteristics of each case was produced and used to make initial comparisons and interpretations. Patterns were explored and common features appeared which gradually fell into categories for further exploration. These were referred to the research questions and the theoretical propositions in starting to build the arguments. Because of the nature and the detail of the data, categories were developed especially targeted on the production and consumption of open spaces, in that order. There were fewer categories on the significance of those spaces for people. Categories also offered good information on how these spaces stand in terms of typology and urban relation to the rest of the *barrio*. Once the categories were set up, tabulations, frequencies and linkages were developed using simple 'by-hand' statistical tools. All of the foregoing operations not only enriched the analysis and general understanding of the subject, but also provided a framework for the analysis of the case studies.

Bearing in mind that 'qualitative analysis is many things, but it is not a process that can be rigidly codified' (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 16), the analysis of the data from the detailed case studies was undertaken following the guidelines of Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions. Only the most relevant interviews and excerpts from them were transcribed and translated into English, but all of them were visited several times and notes were taken. Observations, mapping, as well as visual and documentary data were studied in depth in an effort to find regularities but also discrepancies that could indicate interesting topics for further development. Coding and memos were used to order, categorize and classify the data into themes, and then compared to literature and checked against the research questions. Detailed case studies not only provided valuable data about production and consumption of open spaces, but also about their

meaning, complementing what had been covered only lightly in the general cases. In the end, draft analysis reports were prepared for each detailed case study, in which preliminary findings were discussed; and also conflicts, potentialities and new questions were identified. Arguably the writing was also an analytical tool: '[...] writers inevitably start with a rough draft that goes through not just one or two but numerous iterations in order to generate and clarify ideas and arguments' (Cameron, Nairn *et al*. 2009: 276). At this stage, new themes and propositions had been developed, which made it necessary to confront the theoretical basis and look for new literature. Although the analyses of the general cases were permanently feeding the views of the detailed case studies, at this point they were particularly important in providing a broad picture and in developing the final arguments, interpretations and propositions. The writing of the final draft helped to consolidate everything and present the arguments in a logical and coherent way.

Analysis and interpretation raised a number of issues, starting with the use of several cases, different levels of data detail and different periods of data collection. Although it was difficult to deal with such different types of data, it was very useful because it provided more opportunities to understand the complexity of some themes and see that 'having more than two cases could strengthen the findings even further' (Yin 2003: 133). Although the research is based on a relatively large number of cases, neither generalisation nor replicability is claimed; instead understanding of particular situations was the objective. 'The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization' (Stake 1995: 8). Another important aspect when analysing the data was the translation of interview extracts, as in general, information originated in Spanish. It was a difficult task: on the one hand to avoid misunderstandings or missing nuances in people's narratives, and on the other hand to be as accurate as possible when translating themes and concepts which may not mean the same in English. In those cases, it was preferable to leave the word in Spanish with a brief English explanation. The last issue regarding the analysis was the idea of undertaking some temporal comparisons, taking advantage of having visited some cases several times in the last five years. However, it proved to be difficult because the data collected in the earlier years was good enough to allow a general understanding but not adequate for in-depth comparisons. Perhaps the main issue,

however, is that five years or less was not usually sufficient to observe evident changes in the transformation of those open spaces.

3.6 Reflection on the Methodology and Ethical Issues

Perhaps the main challenge of the methodology was to incorporate different sets of data in terms of the number of cases, degree of detail and space of time in which it was gathered. Furthermore, the author's 20 years of experience and engagement with the topic and the communities must somehow be converted into something 'new'. In evaluating the results, it seems both objectives were mostly accomplished: on the one hand the qualitative approach and the case study strategy made it possible to integrate the different data; on the other hand the ideas, reflections and experience born of long engagement with the topic contributed greatly to producing a 'new' understanding of 'old' subjects. Other issues affecting the methodology and largely related to the ethical dimension were: positionality, representation and translation, and reciprocity. Each of these in turn will be examined below.

Positionality

Finding the 'right' position from which 'to see' the subject is important in all research. However both the subjectivities of the researcher and the 'relationship' with those being researched make it difficult to find a 'neutral' position. In other words, research is never carried out by a faceless researcher engaging in 'objective' relationship with the research subjects, as the researcher's position and other relevant factors always play a role. Being *Bogotano* (from Bogotá), and sharing some general social and cultural characteristics with the people made communication easier. The same was perceived in my condition as a male, which allowed me to move around easily and nearly unnoticed. However, my status as an educated middle class academic was occasionally uncomfortable for some, possibly seen as a symbol of privilege.

About the 'relationship' with the subject of research some argue that distance is needed, in order to gain a better 'view' of it, develop independent judgment and

avoid subjectivity. However, there are other views of the matter: 'qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with the field' (Miles and Huberman 1994: 6); or 'subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding' (Stake 1995: 45). It is, however, a delicate matter that was ever-present during the research process. On ethical grounds, the researcher's involvement within the community is a significant issue, and several questions arise from it: to what extent might this involvement affect communities by creating, for example, false expectations? What is the borderline between understanding a social phenomenon and influencing it? What should the relationship between the researcher and the participants be? These questions were taken into consideration during the research process while trying to achieve a balanced role, and acting as neutrally as possible but without losing engagement with the people and the subject.

Representation and translation

Similarly, the relationship between researcher and community raises issues of representation and interpretation. Translation also adds complexity to the representation of people's ideas and feelings. Although the research was undertaken in the researcher's native country and mother tongue, issues of representation nevertheless arose because of a distance in social and economic terms. 'Representing the voice of the "other" is [therefore] problematic, especially given the distance between the two parties: distances of history and geography, as well as of gender, race and class' (Kellett 2000: 194). Along the same tack, there are sensitive themes such as political interests, or special circumstances, such as family difficulties arising in people's lives, where confidentiality and meticulous care was needed in treating the information. I tried as much as possible to use people's voices, to listen carefully to what people had to say and to try to discern the motivations behind what they were saying, and when interpreting to be as cautious as possible. Real names have been used to make people's thoughts clear, and because all the people wanted to be identified, clearly stating: 'I want to see my name in your document'.

Translation issues became apparent when analysing the data and elaborating the first reports and arguments from it. 'Languages are communication systems inextricably

bound within cultures and different ways of seeing the world' (Kellett 2000: 195). And in addition, there is the politics of languages, in which translating may involve mapping ideas and meanings (Smith 2003). In this sense translation and representation issues were treated with care, and I attempted to remain as detached as possible from my personal positionality and subjectivity. These, however, are complex subjects that every researcher needs to reflect upon, always bearing in mind that there are different and parallel ways of seeing the world.

Reciprocity

Finally the question arises of how to make some return to the communities concerned for their time, effort and help? How to make a genuine contribution and not just pick their brains? This is a difficult matter with no simple answers. It could be said that a fair and honest development of the topic could help to create awareness within and beyond communities about certain difficult aspects. Furthermore, research such as this may contribute to creating or improving policies to ameliorate life in popular settlements. In more practical terms, commitments were made to submit summaries of the case studies to the JACs, and further meetings are planned for when the researcher returns to Bogotá. It is believed that all the above-mentioned issues may be significant, and can provide a partial recompense for the help obtained; however, there may be yet further ways to recognise the value of individuals' participation, and also contribute to the wellbeing of these communities.

3.7 Conclusions

This chapter has explained the methodological design used to explore the production and consumption of open spaces in popular settlements in Bogotá. The major methodological challenge was to incorporate data gathered at different times and with different levels of detail. A further challenge was to link in with the author's experience of nearly 20 years' experience of this topic and of engagement with the *barrio* communities. After providing a general theoretical and methodological context, the practicalities of the methodology were explained. The main decisions about research strategy and settings are discussed, especially in terms of how the

general and the specific cases were selected and the use of both levels of data in addressing the research questions. The methods used to collect the data were discussed, starting out with the methods used in the general cases and explaining the circumstances in which this data was gathered between 2003 and 2007 and how it is connected with the specific case studies and the research in general. The explanation was then focused on the methods used to explore with the detailed case studies during the fieldwork phase.

The last section was devoted to the methods used for analysing and interpreting the data, and to reflections on ethical issues. For analysis and interpretation, special care was taken in order to 'integrate' the findings from the general and the specific cases to produce meaningful results, and also to manage the relatively large amount of data. The assessment of the methodology showed that it was possible with the design used to integrate the different sets of data. Reflection upon the ethical issues raised by the study includes the researcher's positionality, as well as the representation and translation of verbal data. Also, the relationship with the communities researched raises some ethical dimensions, as does the issue of recompensing the people involved for their time, effort and help.

Framed by methodology and with the theoretical illumination offered in chapter two, the research approach has now been expounded. Chapters five, six and seven will explore the findings and elaborate on the different arguments generated. However, before that can be attempted, the context needs to be clearly stated, in terms of the nature of popular settlements and open spaces in Bogotá. Furthermore, detailed explanation of the cases themselves is required. Both themes are the topic of the next chapter.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the context of this research and presents the case study areas. The research is situated in Colombia, a country with over 40 million inhabitants where more than 70% of the population live in urban areas (Worldbank 2007). Colombia began the 20th century as one of the weakest economies in Latin America: this was reflected in a low rate of economic development and a lack of basic services and amenities for the population (Pearce 1990). With industrial development, the opening of the economy to foreign investment, and incipient mechanization in the production of coffee - the country's main export product - the economy started to grow. However, this economic benefit has never been shared by the majority of the population. In this regard, Pearce (1990) views Colombia as two different countries existing in parallel: one is a 'statistical' nation, which tries to ensure political stability and steady economic growth; the other is the 'real' nation, which includes a large population working and living in the 'informal' sector of the economy.

Bogotá, the capital city, with nearly 7 million inhabitants (DANE 2007), is located in the Andean mountains in the centre of the country (figure 4.1). It is the economic engine of the country, with a per capita income over 140% above the national average, and a quality of life index rating that is 15 points higher than the rest of the country (Worldbank 2007). However, at 11.4%, its level of unemployment is higher than the national average, and the informal sector accounts for about 53% of its workforce (Worldbank 2007). Poverty levels are also high, increasing from 35% to 50% between 1997 and 2002, in tandem with the economic crisis that struck the country in 1999. In 2004, 43.4% of Bogotá's population was considered poor, and 7.4% lived in extreme poverty, a significant proportion of whom inhabited the so-called popular settlements (Alcaldia Mayor de Bogotá 2004). Poverty and inequality are key issues that impact especially on informal settlements; however, as this thesis argues, there is more to these settlements than economic constraints.

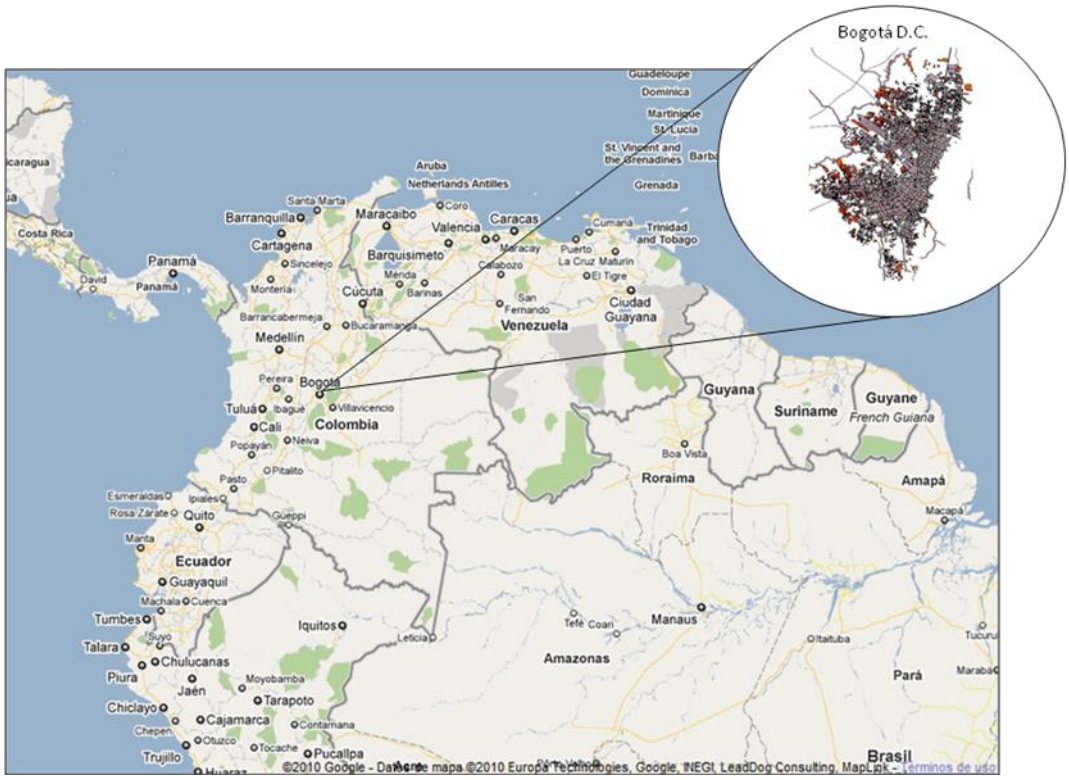


Figure 4.1: Location of Colombia and Bogotá
Adapted from Google Maps and www.eseusme.gov.co

The chapter is organised into four main parts, excluding the conclusion. The first section introduces popular settlements in Bogotá, from the time of their creation and expansion in the 1970s and 1980s, up to the current policies and programmes that concern them. The second part focuses on open spaces in popular settlements in Bogotá, drawing from existing literature as well as current policies and programmes. The third section of the chapter presents the 57 general cases, and the fourth section the six detailed case studies. The chapter finishes with a summary of the main points and helps to establish continuity with the succeeding analytical chapters.

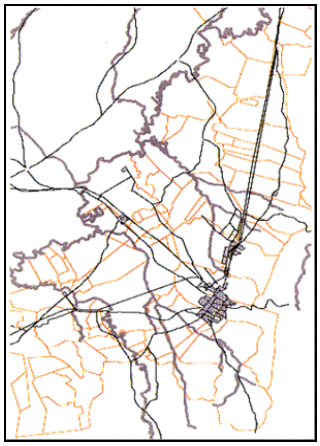
4.2 Popular Settlements in Bogotá

4.2.1 Creation and Expansion

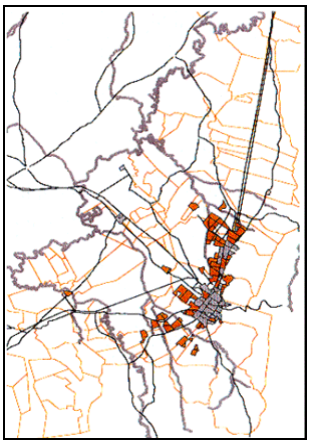
Bogotá, in common with most Colombian cities, stayed relatively small between its foundation in 1538 up to the beginning of the 20th Century. The population in 1905

was estimated at around 100,000 inhabitants (Torres 2009: 100). In the 1920s and 1930s, with incipient industrialization, the city started to expand due to an influx of newcomers from rural areas; and the population was boosted by a considerable demographic boom. For the first time farm land around Bogotá came under pressure for new urban development. Vargas and Zambrano (1988) explain how during those years new dwelling patterns appeared, in the form of the '*inquilinatos*' (tenement houses commonly found in central areas, often overcrowded and of poor quality) as well as the first informal settlements in the western and southern peripheries of the city.

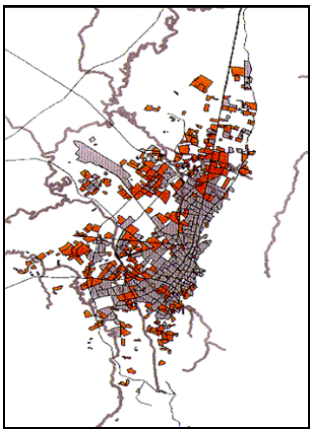
However, it was in the late 1940s and the 1950s that the growth of Bogotá really became visible, with consequences for urban and economic planning. This growing tendency became even more evident in the 1960s and 1970s, and only slowed down in the late 1980s and 1990s (Torres and Castillo 2009). Industrialization, as in past decades, was one of the reasons, but a relatively new circumstance contributed to drawing people into the cities: the political violence in the countryside, which continues to this day. These trends brought about a considerable demand for housing and urban services for which the city was not prepared, and other 'solutions' started to appear, some in the hands of speculators and some in the hands of the people themselves. The process of 'pirate' urbanisation was born here, where an owner or promoter of farm land on the outskirts of the city divides it and sells individual plots with no public services, proper streets, transport and urban planning or building permission (Arango 1982). Land invasion by organised communities and individuals was also rife in this period. The city's planners and managers could not cope with these new settlements, but to some extent allowed them because they represented a way of resolving the city's social and urban dynamics (Rueda Garcia 2000). Between 1930 and 1990 the population of Bogotá multiplied twenty-fold, growing from 300,000 to 6,000,000 inhabitants (Torres 2009). Between 1938 and 1985, its size increased tenfold, from 2,514 hectares to 24,056 hectares (Red Bogotá 2010) (figure 4.2). To a large extent this expansion was through the growth of popular settlements. From the 1940s to the 1980s, the country changed from having a mainly rural population to one where the majority live in urban agglomerations.



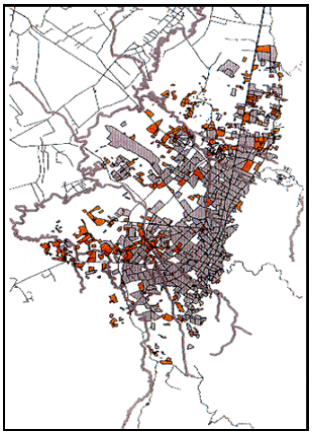
Year: 1900
Area: 326 Ha
Population: 100,000



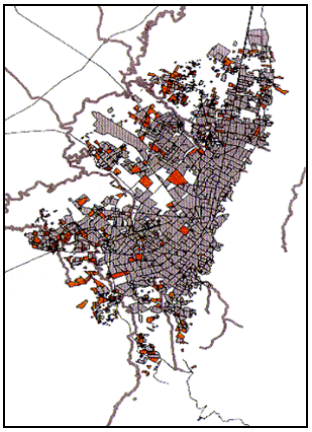
Year: 1940
Area: 2,514 Ha
Population: 330,000



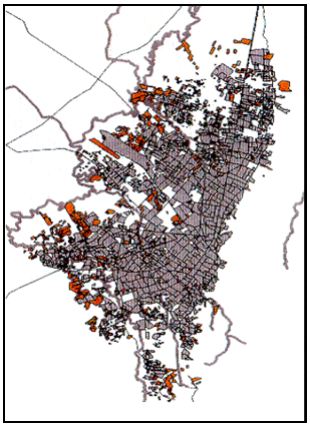
Year: 1950
Area: 8,084 Ha
Population: 715,000



Year: 1970
Area: 13,985 Ha
Population: 2,800,000



Year: 1980
Area: 24,046 Ha
Population: 4,200,000



Year: 1990
Area: 29,308 Ha
Population: 6,000,000

Figure 4.2: Urban and population growth in Bogotá
Adapted from: http://www.redbogota.com/endatos/0100/0140/01412.htm

Today, Bogotá continues to expand, and forced and voluntary migration from rural areas continues to make a significant contribution to this growth. The forced displacement is owing to political violence, while voluntary migration occurs when people look for better opportunities and seek to avoid rural poverty. Approximately 30% of new urban dwellers in recent years have been rural migrants (Worldbank 2007). A large proportion of these new urban inhabitants first establish themselves in popular settlements.

4.2.2 Popular Settlements

Popular settlements are today a consistent feature of Bogotá; they are not growing at the same pace as in the 1960s and 1970s, but they are still expanding, possibly at a faster rate than the rest of the city. More than 50% of the city is believed to have grown from some kind of informal pattern (urban and/or housing development), and in the late 1990s nearly 25% of Bogotá's area was covered by land that is occupied informally or 'illegally' – as it is described in urban policies (Rueda Garcia 2000). Although it is possible to find centrally-based settlements with informal characteristics, popular settlements are normally found in peripheral areas. They are normally defined in urban and housing policies and to some extent in the academic debate by what they lack: shortage of economic and urban resources, lack of urban infrastructure and lack of proper housing and social services. But perhaps their main characteristic is that they have largely developed through self-help practices, with little participation by public or private bodies.

The origin of popular settlements can usually be ascribed to one of the following factors, or to more than one of them working in combination: 'pirate' urbanisation, land invasion or individual plot development from a site-and-services public project or a private scheme. Table 4.1 summarises the principal characteristics:

Table 4.1: Origins and main characteristics of popular settlements

	Land	Public services	Urban space[9]	Housing
'Pirate' urbanisation	Purchased from an illegal developer. Legalisation of the *barrio* and individual plot titles after several years.	Initially residents 'informally' connect to/access to public services, until they are in a position to negotiate with the municipality. This can take years.	The 'pirate' developer provides a basic urban layout including the streets and sometimes other open spaces. The community organises and changes them over the years.	Developed through self-build and self-help practices.
Land invasion	Illegal land invasion. Legalisation of the *barrio* and of individual plot titles after several years.	Initially residents 'informally' connect to/access public services, until they are in a position to negotiate with the municipality. This can take years.	The community provide themselves with an urban plan, and develop and change it over the years.	Developed through self-build and self-help practices.
Site-and-services public project[10]	Purchased from a public office. The b*arrio* is legal, and plot titles are in the hands of the residents.	Public services are provided from the beginning.	Streets and other open spaces are planned and developed. Changes may be introduced by the residents.	Developed through self-build and self-help practices.
Individual plot development from a private project[11]	Purchased from a private company. The *barrio* is legal, and plot titles are in the hands of the residents.	Public services are provided from the beginning.	Streets and other open spaces are planned and developed. Changes may be introduced by the residents.	Developed through self-build and self-help practices.

In addition, some public housing programmes, and, more recently, private sector housing schemes, have been developed within what were once informal areas, or very near to current informal sites. And as Tarchopulos and Ceballos argue, since

[9] This aspect will be further developed in chapter 5.

[10] Neither site-and-services projects nor public housing schemes are nowadays common. Public participation has been channelled into subsidies to residents, which has encouraged private housing projects.

[11] This is similar to site-and-services but is a private initiative. Furthermore some variations are found, for example the plot is sometimes sold with a 'basic unit' which the buyer must complete as a house.

many of them have been greatly transformed, in several cases it is difficult to distinguish them from nearby informal developments:

> *The solutions offered [by public and private housing projects] to low-income users do not fulfil people's minimum expectations. A vast number of these houses had to be demolished and 85% have had to be adapted to be able to meet basic needs. (Tarchopulos and Ceballos 2003: 16)*

Popular settlements in Bogotá nowadays not only cover large areas, but are also diverse – diverse in origin, in levels of consolidation and in social dynamics (case studies illustrate this physical and social diversity). In the same area, different formal and informal origins co-exist, and after transformation and consolidation it can eventually become impossible to distinguish them, as Kellett (2005) suggests. Popular settlements constitute not only a spatial practice but also a social response to the challenges of the city.

4.2.3 Policies and Programmes

National and municipal urban and housing policies aim to organise, improve and to some extent prevent the formation of new popular settlements. In general, policies have changed in recent decades from state provision of housing and urban services to encouraging the market to provide these services; in other words, from actually building the houses and urban facilities to giving subsidies to the residents and facilitating procedures in the private sector. National and municipal urban and housing policy agencies have also linked housing policies to macro-economic policies, which means supporting the economy through the construction of housing. This kind of policy has been highly criticised by some academics, such as Saldarriaga (2003), who argues that these policies may benefit the private construction sector but do not necessarily meet the needs and economic resources of the residents, nor are they necessarily in conformity with housing quality standards. He also suggests that this could be part of the reason why popular settlements have not diminished in the last decades, but on the contrary, as people look for more affordable and convenient options, they have expanded. Other reasons are to be found in the size and the dynamics of these settlements, which make it virtually

impossible for any policy to be successful under these terms. In this regard, current urban and housing polices aim on the one hand to provide urban management strategies to discourage the formation of new informal settlements, and on the other hand, to improve the existing settlements. Arguably the results in regard to both objectives have been limited, and urban disadvantaged groups continue as ever to a large extent to provide themselves with housing and urban facilities.

Current urban and housing policies (2006-2010) have been formulated by the national government with the following aims: to 1) improve management strategies regarding land tenure and use in order to provide more and cheaper land for housing projects and fight against 'pirate' urbanisation; 2) encourage urban renovation and creation of public space, which includes settlement relocation; 3) improve urban information systems; and 4) promote housing projects with financial strategies and the provision of subsidies (Giraldo, Bayona *et al.* 2009).

On the Municipal level the POT ('*Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial'* – Territorial Planning and Land Use Plan) has since the beginning of 2000 oriented the city's urban development. The POT divides the city in two: the formal and the informal, with more than 2,500,000 inhabitants living 'illegally' (DAPD 2010) in the latter. This highlights how popular settlements are seen in the terms of the policy as illegal and marginal, a problem that needs to be solved. In this regard the main objective of the policy is how to build more houses by encouraging and facilitating private sector initiatives. Three strategies are planned: 1) improve land management procedures to make more land available and fight against 'pirate' urbanisation; 2) improve planning and construction permission procedures to make formal planning and building easier and faster; and 3) offer subsidies to buyers to encourage them to buy, but also to encourage the building of private projects. For the already-established popular settlements, and arguably as a second level policy, the '*Programa de Mejoramiento Integral de Barrios'* – PMIB - (Integral *Barrios* Upgrading Programme) has been implemented. It mainly deals with urban infrastructure and facilities, but land tenure regularisation and *barrios* legalization also form part of this policy. The main municipal office in charge of this policy is the '*Caja de Vivienda Popular'* (Popular Housing Office), which also has housing improvement

programmes in these areas. In addition, a recently-introduced department, the '*Secretaría del Hábitat'* (Habitat Secretariat) has responsibilities under this policy, but more in terms of coordinating the different municipal offices and public services than working directly with the *barrios*.

The above briefly summarises the policies and programmes existing in Colombia – and especially in Bogotá – addressing popular settlements, but these, while apparently well-motivated, have not been able to achieve ideal results. An explanation may be found in the fact that these policies are not directed towards purely technical ends, but follow different economic and political agendas. It can also be argued that – quite apart from attending effectively to crucial issues – they deliver the minimum requirements needed to avoid confrontation and to maintain social control (Gilbert and Ward 1985). Furthermore, the size of these settlements is vast, the urban and social dynamics are complex and public resources are limited. One way or another, therefore, people continue to provide themselves with housing and urban facilities.

4.3 Open Spaces in Popular Settlements

4.3.1 Open Spaces in the *Barrios:* Context and General Issues

Public space, as it is broadly referred to in Colombian academic and policy debates, has over the last decades been given increasing importance in Colombian cities. At the beginning of the 20th Century the concept of public space was associated with two themes: first, an urban place for gathering, recreation and rest; and secondly, a place where public monuments were located (Saydi and Duque 2003). However, it was not until the 1950s that the first policies were initiated, and it was only in the 1960s, with the fast growth of cities, that the subject began to figure in urban planning and development considerations.

The Colombian Constitution of 1991 acknowledged the right of all people to public space, and gives the State the obligation to protect it. Public urban space is defined by Colombian Planning Regulations (Law 9 of 1989, art. 5), as the circulation areas of cities, both for pedestrians and for vehicles; recreation areas, active (sports fields) and passive (parks, gardens); the free space between buildings; bodies of water and their surrounding areas; the natural areas within the city; the areas around the public utilities needed to operate these systems; and in general all those areas of public interest and collective use. In the policy and to some extent in the academic debate as well, the main interpretation as regards ownership is that public space is the opposite of private property. And the main policy actions, especially as observed in Bogotá, have been related to recovering public spaces from private uses, including motor vehicles and street vendors, for truly public uses. New public space projects have been developed around Bogotá, including parks, exclusive pedestrian streets, and urban renovation initiatives to liberate space and upgrade it for public use. This is now clearly observable in the city, and with the *transmilenio* (public transport system), 'Bogotá's face' has been transformed, as has been acknowledged even beyond the bounds of city and the nation (Beckett and Godoy 2010).

Some important public space initiatives have been located in popular settlements, such as the '*Tunal*' park, the '*Entrenubes*' park, or the '*Porvenir*' boulevard and cycle route. These are macro-projects aimed at making a large impact, but with limited influence on the *barrios* and on people's daily lives. The '*Tunal*' park[12] is an area with 14 football fields, several playgrounds, a library and other facilities, and plenty of free green and paved areas. It is surrounded by a fence and has specific opening times. The '*Entrenubes*' park[13] is a protected area in the eastern mountains to the south of Bogotá. The '*Porvenir*' boulevard[14] is an 18 kilometre long pedestrian and cycle route that connects the south-eastern peripheries of the city. These facilities and some similar ones on a more modest scale have been important in terms of connecting popular settlements to the city and providing popular settlers with entertainment and free space on a weekly or monthly basis, but the impact on everyday life is reduced. There has been a lack of interest in the open spaces of the

[12] See more in http://www.bogota.gov.co
[13] See more in http://www.secretariadeambiente.gov.co
[14] See more in http://www.bogota.gov.co

barrios, among other reasons, because it is believed that nothing but housing is important to the popular dweller. '[T]he unplanned settlements focus on obtaining the maximum advantage of the land [for housing], thus minimizing the area intended for public space' (Ceballos 2004).

Most of the current information available from the government regarding open spaces in the *barrios* consists of reports carrying information on technical and financial issues of projects developed or to be developed in particular areas. Many of them come under the PMIB policy noted earlier, or the current OPC programme which will be explained in the next section. Under these initiatives streets and stairways have been constructed, and a number of parks have been upgraded, which has had a positive impact on the *barrios;* however, the reach of these initiatives is low compared to the size of the settlements. The other area of municipal involvement occurs when cultural events are staged in *barrio* parks, or when the municipality organises them together with communities and NGOs. Music, dance, movies, fairs and other activities take place at weekends, with a positive impact on the *barrios*. However, as with physical improvement initiatives, these have only been developed in a few areas which have achieved a relatively well-consolidated status.

From an academic perspective, the understanding of open spaces in the *barrios* is also limited. As discussed earlier, much of the interest centres on housing issues, and it is supposed that these spaces are not important to the people or to the configuration of the settlements. Of that research which has been undertaken the works of Riaño (1990), Saldarriaga (1996), Viviescas (1997), Rojas and Guerrero (1997), Nino and Chaparro (1997), and Avendaño and Carvajalino (2000) stand out as important contributions to the subject. They have documented the use of open spaces, bringing to light, for example, the close relationship with the house in an outside-inside link, and the sports focus in the use of many of them, suggesting '*la cancha'* (the sports field) as one of the main open spaces of the *barrios*. They have argued the social importance of open spaces to the *barrios*, where cultural exchange and social values are built.

4.3.2 Policies and Programmes

The previous section explained how the right to public space is expressed in the Colombian Constitution, and how the State is under an obligation to protect it. The national urban policy 2006-2010 regarding public space aims to improve the quantity and quality of it for all cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants. The national body responsible is the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development, which sets its objectives for public space as: 1) to improve quantity and quality standards; 2) to create mobility networks accessible to disabled people; 3) to incorporate environmental attributes; and 4) to ensure that it is commonly owned (to fight against privatisation) and collectively used (DNP 2006).

The municipal level connects national directives to two sets of policies: the already mentioned POT and the Master Plan for Public Space (Law 215 of 2005). The POT understands public space as a way of looking for a more egalitarian city by freeing and upgrading urban space for common use (Saydi and Duque 2003). It also links public space with mobility (roads and cycle routes) and transport *('transmilenio'*) programmes. And also to what is called 'Municipal Ecological Structure', meaning perimeter mountains, rivers, streams, and water reservoirs. On the other hand, the Public Space Master Plan is more oriented towards management and how to achieve the objectives of the POT, seeking the involvement not only of all the municipal offices but also the communities. The Master Plan establishes three lines of work: management, increases in size and accessibility, and quality. Among management strategies, two programmes are especially relevant to popular settlements: encouraging communities' involvement in the design, construction and maintenance of neighbourhood and locality parks and the enhancement of the cultural, recreational and sports programmes in parks. In relation to increasing the public space available, the Master Plan aims for 6 square metres per person, increasing from the current allocation of 2.4m^2 (DAPD 2010). And in terms of accessibility, it aims to make public spaces available to all. As for quality of space, the strategies are related to preserving monuments and to providing more urban furniture for streets and parks.

These policies are to be implemented by the municipal offices and the programmes they organise. Several programmes and municipal offices have been involved in recent years in projects which are related directly or indirectly to open spaces in the *barrios*. Indirectly, the most important programme has been the above-mentioned PMIB, which started in 2000 and will be revised in 2010 (Escallon 2006). This programme followed the 'desmarginalización' (de-marginalisation) programme developed between 1998 and 2001, in which a number of *barrio* roads and infrastructure, pavements and parks were improved. A more open space focused programme was the '*Obras con Saldo Pedagógico'* – OSP – (Works with an Educational Outcome), which ran from 1995 until 2003. It started during the first Mayoral term of Antanas Mockus and continued through the Peñalosa administration and into the second Mockus period. It aimed to improve the participation and management processes and skills of communities, and to provide them with resources to accomplish their own built environment initiatives (Hernandez 2008). During Garzon's term of office, the programme changed its name to '*Obras con Participación Ciudadana'* – OPC – (Works with Citizens' Participation) but aims and procedures remain almost the same. The current Moreno administration still runs the programme, however the so-called social component (participation of communities and improvement of their own management skills) has gradually declined in importance as against the building component. The OSP and OPC have not been big programmes in resources and in the number of projects developed; however, their relatively 'small' interventions have influenced open spaces in the *barrios* positively, and have contributed to community organisation. In this regard, the '*Juntas de Acción Comunal'* – JAC – (Communal Action Groups), which provide a formal channel for community organisation in the *barrios*, have learnt that if they can put together a project, there is a possibility that the municipality will provide the resources to develop it.

As explained, the main municipal office in charge of popular settlements urban and housing issues is the '*Caja de Vivienda Popular'* (Popular Housing Office), and in terms of coordination the '*Secretaría del Hábitat'* (Habitat Secretariat). However, several other offices participate in this, among them the '*Instituto Distrital de Participación y Acción Comunal*' – IDPAC – (Municipal Participation and

Communal Action Institute*)*,which runs the OPC programme; the '*Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deportes*' – IDRD – (Municipal Recreation and Sports Institute), which is in charge of parks around the city; the '*Instituto de Desarrollo Urbano'* – IDU – (Urban Development Institute), which deals with major issues of infrastructure and roads; and the Botanical Gardens, which provide trees, gardens and ecological consultancy.

Another key actor in this process is the JAC. This is a community based organisation, and arguably its main role is to 'connect' the municipality to the *barrios*. JACs are the formal organisation bodies of communities; they hold legal responsibility for resources allocation and building contracts, among other things. JACs were created in 1958 and were further regulated in 1976 and 2003, under Laws 1930 and 2350 respectively. Each neighbourhood in the city is permitted its own JAC (the same is the case in rural areas, corresponding to the '*veredas*' – rural areas or villages); however, generally only the *barrios* have them, or at any rate those that are visibly active. The JAC has a management structure in which the elected president is directly responsible to the community and the municipality. The JAC members, who work on a voluntary basis, are elected by the *barrio* dwellers for a four-year period (Law 2350 of 2003).

JACs are intended to promote community participation on *barrio* problems and initiatives, and can organise activities and raise resources to develop projects of interest to communities. In this sense, JACs can negotiate resources with the municipality and other actors for social programmes and also for physical improvements, such as open spaces. This negotiation role has opened the door to clientelistic relationships with politicians, as Torres (2002) points out, and as this thesis identifies. Torres (2002) suggests that JACs are a government strategy to control community-based organisations and people's demands, following the same line of argument as Gilbert and Ward (1985: 238) when they explain how 'these formal channels have served the interest of the state more than those of the communities'. Within this panorama, JACs have had an active role in the transformation of open spaces in the *barrios*, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

To sum up, there is an extensive range of policies, programmes and actors associated with open spaces. However, as regards urban and housing issues, these plans have not been able to meet the needs of all, and for the same reasons as those discussed earlier: scale, complexity and lack of precise knowledge and information, as well as of resources. Hence people in popular settlements not only provide themselves with houses, but also to a large extent with urban spaces and facilities. Bogotá´s policies and programmes have helped considerably to alleviate the situation, when compared with other Colombian cities; however, the scale and the need is still immense.

4.4 The 57 General Cases

4.4.1 Location and General Issues

As discussed in the methodology chapter, 57 cases were chosen to explore open spaces in popular settlements in Bogotá (table 4.2). These cases were selected from previous studies carried out by the author between 2003 and 2007. These cases served the purposes of the research in several ways: first, they provided quantitative and qualitative data for a range of open spaces in the city which contributed to a better understanding of the subjects of the research; second, they provided a framework for the six case studies; third, they contributed a different type of data for discussing, for example, general uses of open spaces and typology, which would have been difficult to do with only six case studies; and fourth, they allowed me to reflect on cases I had previously explored, but in the light of a new focus of interest.

The 57 cases are nearly all located around the city, and most of them are at the periphery (figure 4.3), confirming one of the characteristics of popular settlements in Bogotá. Many of them are in the South and South East, which also corresponds to the largest and most populated popular settlements in the city: *Usme* and Ciudad

Bolivar. The other cases are in the West and North East peripheries where there are several *barrios*. Although there are a few cases set in the North East and South East, there are no cases in the North and in the East of the city: the North because it has traditionally been the wealthiest area and the East because it is steep and mountainous. In neither area has this prevented the development of a few *barrios*, but those that have grown up are not large settlements, compared, for example to the *barrios* found in the South and South Western peripheries. Two of the cases are situated in a central area (numbers 7 and 8), and are linked to relatively well consolidated *barrios* that were once informal or were created on an 'informal' basis, but now are fully integrated into the urban fabric. Apart from illustrating the nature of open spaces in the different *barrios* of Bogotá, the case locations help to exemplify the development of popular settlements in the city, and their size and impact.

Just as in the diversity of their locations, the cases themselves are diverse in nature. Uses and morphological types will be explained in the next section, but they are also different in origins, topography, size, location within the settlement, consolidation, provision of green areas, facilities and urban furniture. Regarding the origin of these open spaces, 12 were produced within the OSP programme and 16 within the OPC programme, which comes to nearly half the cases. The other half have been managed by the community itself, some with small grants from the municipality or in the form of politicians' '*auxilios*' (subsidies), which will be discussed in chapter 5. As to the topography of the cases, nearly half are on relatively flat surfaces, while the other half are on steep or very steep sites. One of the most illustrative examples is the case study of '*El Danubio'* (number 40), in which preparatory earth-moving was considerable and was undertaken by the community (chapter 5 will develop this further).

On the question of size, most of the cases are relatively small: a *barrio* park, a street, a stairway; however, there are a few bigger sites such as '*Bellavista*' park (number 19) or the *Aguas Claras* (number 48*)* case study. These cases embodied other issues of significance to the research, such as the use and appropriation dynamics of one large park (*Bellavista*), and the relationship between the streets and parks in *Aguas*

Claras. Regarding the location within the *barrio*, more than two thirds of the cases are situated in a central area. Most of them are parks, and their location was decided from the beginning of the settlement. As will be discussed further on, this may imply the significance of these spaces within communities. On consolidation, the cases show large variations, to some extent depending on the consolidation status of the settlement. Some *barrios* are relatively well-consolidated – including their open spaces – whilst others are not. In some cases open spaces are just unbuilt areas with nothing much in them, while others exhibit the same facilities and refinements as any fully formally designed city park. Contrary to the common assumption that popular settlements do not have green areas, this is true of only 20% of the cases. The rest exhibit some degree of green space; and nearly 50% of the cases show a considerable extent, including trees and gardens. Lastly, on facilities and urban furniture, all the cases show some provision; however, the quantity and the quality, as well as the maintenance, differ greatly in most of the cases.

Table 4.2: The 57 general cases

Case No.	Name	Case No.	Name
1	Costa Rica pedestrian street	30	San Luis park
2	La Gaitana park: 'Sueños de Vida'	31	Olivares park: 'Nuestro Parque'
3	Garces Navas park: 'Senderos de Vida'	32	Lorenzo Alcantus park
4	Los Monjes park	33	La Marichuela park
5	El Codito stairs	34	Usminia park
6	Santa Cecilia stairs: 'Ascenso y Descenso con Seguridad'	35	Tequendama park
7	San Francisco park: 'Jardín Abuelos	36	Quintas del Plan Social park
8	Pensilvania park	37	Quintas del Plan Social II park
9	La Reconquista street and stairways	38	Aurora II park
10	Molinos park	39	Aurora park
11	San Agustín stairways	40*	Danubio park
12	Rafael Uribe pavements	41	San Isidro façades
13	El Cerrito park	42	Usme Centro façades
14	Asovivir park	43	Nuevo Porvenir park: 'La Reconciliación'
15*	Villa Sonia park: 'Por un Bien Común'	44	La Castaña stairways
16	Bosa Brasila park	45	San Martín de Loba boulevard: 'Alameda el Progreso'
17	San Martín pedestrian street	46	Guacamayas stairs: 'Camino el Nogal'
18	Americas park	47	Bello Horizonte street and stairs: 'Calle de la Unión'
19	Bellavista park	48*	Aguas Claras parks
20	Bohios de Hunza park	49*	Nueva Argentina park
21	La Aldea community room	50	Nueva Argentina II park
22*	La Andrea parks	51*	Los Cerezos park
23	Brasilia park	52	Rincón de Galicia park
24	La Marichuela II park	53	Estrella del Sur park: 'La Conexión'
25	Chuniza park	54	Tanque Laguna park
26	El Líbano park	55	EL Consuelo boulevard and stairways
27	Gran Yomasa park	56	San Carlos park: 'El Planchon'
28	Valle de Cafam park	57	Restrepo park
29	Libano pedestrian street: 'Alameda Tercer Milenio'		

* The 6 detailed case studies.

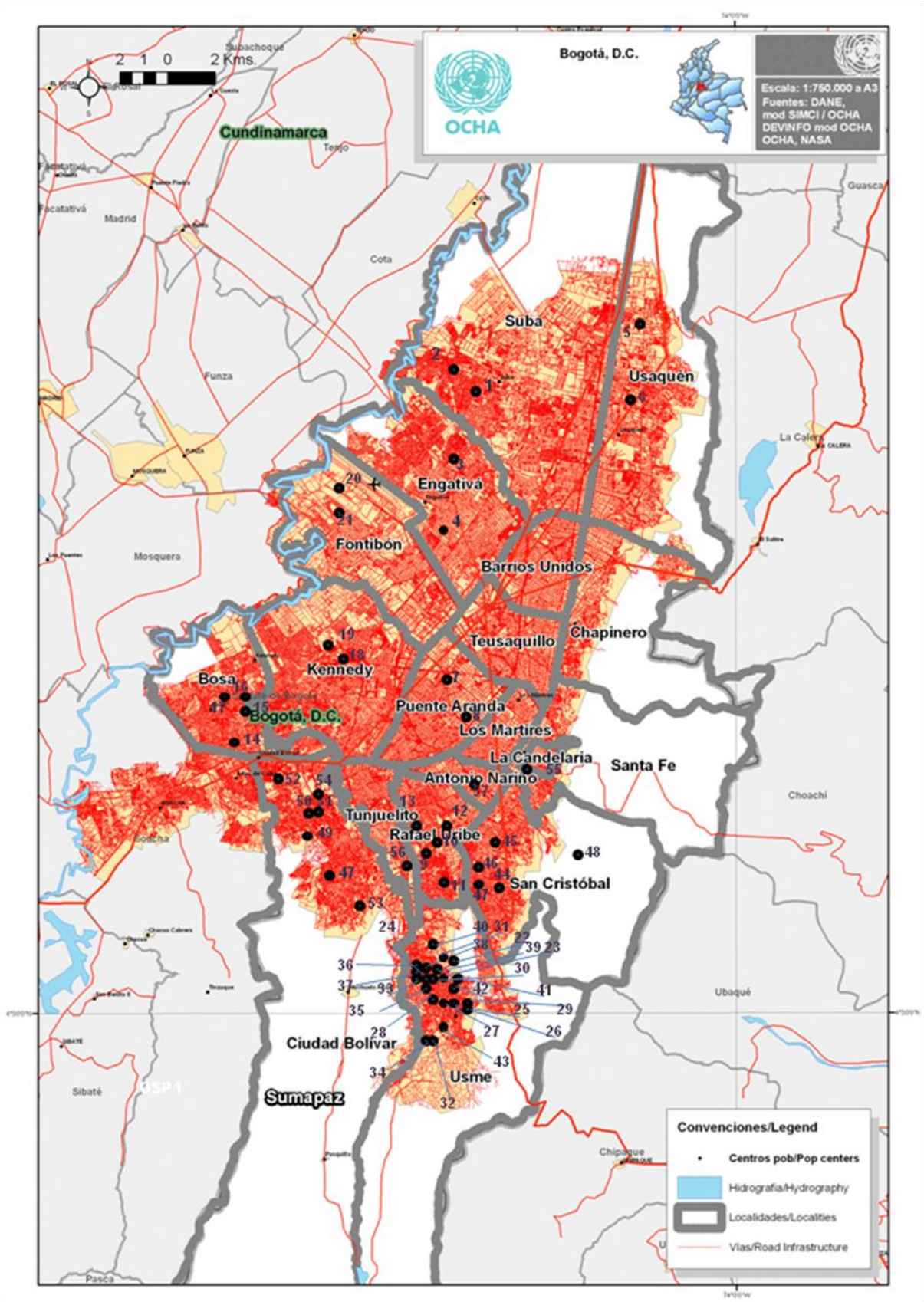


Figure 4.3: Location of 57 cases
Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Colombia. http://ochaonline.un.org/colombia

4.4.2 Themes and Types

Open spaces in popular settlements in Bogotá exhibit three broad types: parks with a sports field or '*cancha*'; parks with no '*cancha*'; and streets and stairways. As discussed in the literature review chapter and confirmed throughout the thesis, play is one of the main uses of open space in general (including streets) and of parks in particular. Therefore the sports pitch, which is usually a multi-functional field for playing five-a-side football and basketball, is a feature of many parks. When this is the case, they fall under the common heading of '*la cancha'*, rather than 'the park'. More than half of the cases are parks with a '*cancha*' (table 4.3). Some other parks, for reasons of size, steep terrain or just community preference, lack a sports field, as in La Andrea (phase 3 park, case 22); but these parks are less common and so they are less represented in the general cases (table 4.3). The third type of open space in the *barrios* is represented by cases that show initiatives to build or improve pavements, stairways and urban furniture. With stairs, there are platforms intended for rest-pauses and to facilitate entry to houses; these platforms also being used for other collective activities (play, chat).

There are two other types of cases, which do not strictly fall under the category of open spaces: community halls and initiatives to embellish façades. These make up only three cases in total, and were included because they represent two important associated themes of open spaces. The communal meeting room or '*salón comunal'* is usually located within or very close to the *barrio* park, and its dynamic is largely related to the open space and the community. Like open spaces, community halls are communally-used areas, although not open to the elements. The cases featuring façade embellishment were included because they also represent a common feature of open spaces: the buildings that frame such spaces and the work and care which many popular settlers put into the façades of their houses. These cases also helped to explore the relationship between the actual open space and its surrounding buildings.

Table 4.3: Distribution of the 57 cases

Open space	No.	%
Parks with a '*Cancha*' (sports field)	32	56
Parks without '*cancha*'	9	15
Pedestrian streets and/or stairs	13	23
Communal meeting room	1	2
Façade embellishment	2	4
Total	57	100

The 57 cases are presented below according to the above table and in groups of six (with some exceptions). Layout sketches and photographs are included, as well as the name and the case number, allowing them to be identified on the Bogotá map (figure 4.3). There is also a brief explanation of special features.

Parks with a *cancha*: group 1. This first group of six parks are situated in relatively well-consolidated *barrios*. Compared to most of the cases, these are big parks with good facilities and urban furniture. With the exception of case number 4, all have more than one sports field, and cases two and ten also have an indoor sports facility within the park. These two parks have had significant funding from the municipality, and are known as locality parks, meaning that they are intended to cater for a larger population beyond the *barrio* in which they are situated.

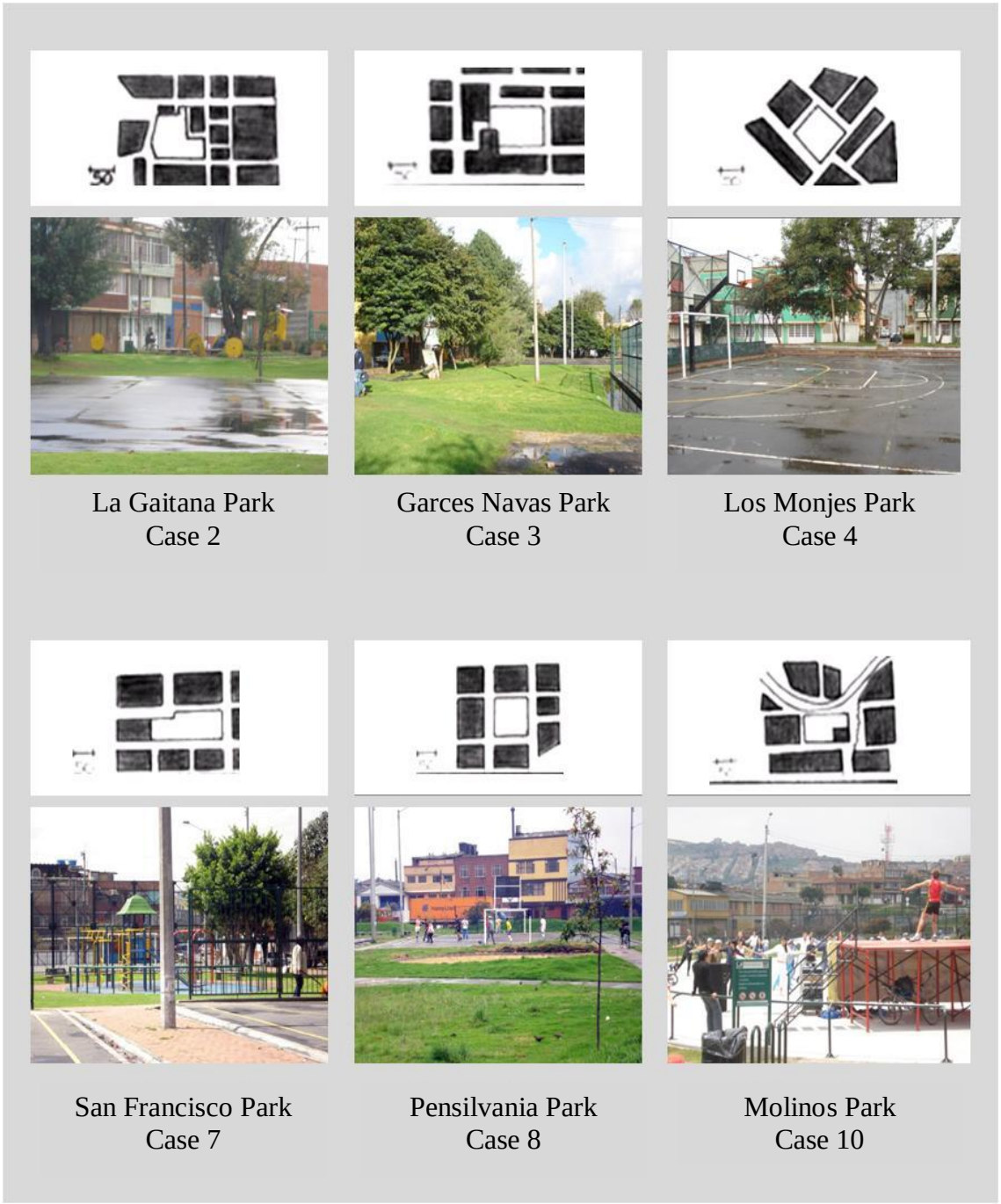


Figure 4.4: Parks with a *cancha*: group 1

Parks with *cancha*: group 2. In terms of size, these cases are more diverse than the first group. Number 19, '*Bellavista'*, is the largest park out of all the cases. It has a normal-sized football pitch, two multi-purpose fields, a number of playgrounds, a skating area and several recreational green and paved places. It is a locality park, and was fully developed by the municipality. However, the community was also involved through the JAC, and now actively works on the care and maintenance of the park. Case 22, '*La Andrea'*, was selected as one of the six case studies, and will be explained in more detail in the following section.

Figure 4.5: Parks with *cancha*: group 2

Parks with *cancha*: group 3. Amid the diversity of these parks, those in this group have something in common, all being situated in the *Usme* locality. Also, all have been upgraded thanks to community initiatives, and with small grants from public (as distinct from OSP and OPC programmes) and NGO funds. Cases 23 and 30 are small *barrio* parks, while cases 25, 26 and 28 are larger interventions. Consolidation status also varies, cases 25 and 30 arguably being in the first stages of consolidation, while facilities in cases 24 and 28 were observed to exhibit a relatively high state of consolidation.

Figure 4.6: Parks with *cancha*: group 3

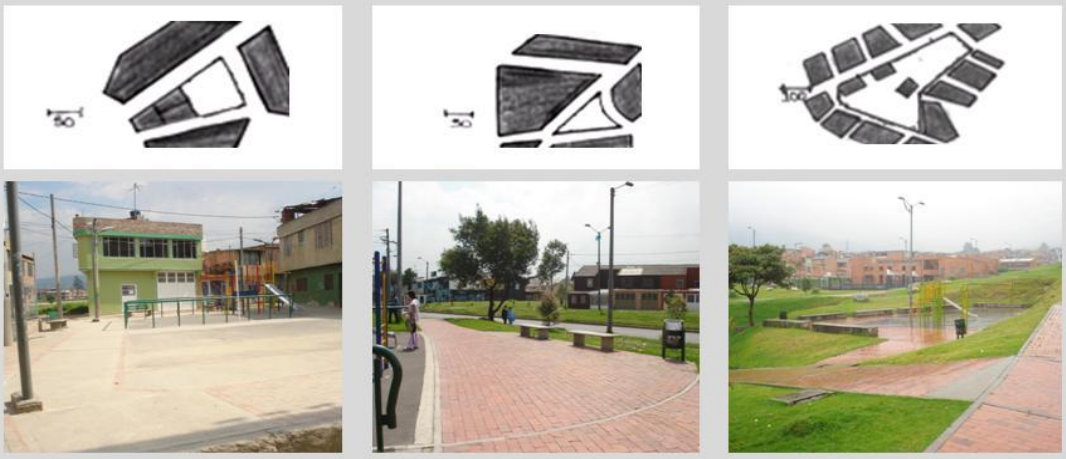
Parks with *cancha*: group 4. Parks in this group have in common a relatively low level of consolidation; all, however, exhibit facilities for sports and play. These are *barrio* parks, which vary in size. Cases 38 and 40 are the largest in the group, and case 40, *'Danubio',* is also one of the six case studies and will be explained in more detail in a later section. Cases 31, 32, 34 and 40 are situated on steep sites, which had to be partially levelled in order to build the '*cancha*'.

Figure 4.7: Parks with *cancha*: group 4

Parks with *cancha*: group 5. These examples show the diversity of open spaces. Cases 48 '*Aguas Claras'* and 49 *'Nueva Argentina'* form two of the six case studies that are dealt with in the next section. Case 53 has the lowest level of consolidation. Case 54, '*Tanque Laguna'*, has had a long history of struggle (as will be further discussed in chapter 5). Cases 56 and 57 are located in *barrios* which were once peripheral and with low levels of consolidation, but which have now become almost central and well-consolidated.

Figure 4.8: Parks with *cancha*: group 5

Parks without *cancha*: group 1. These cases do not have sports fields, but they have playgrounds and free green and paved areas used, among other things, for play. In other words, they may not have a '*cancha*' as such, but all the same, their main use is for sports and play, as is confirmed by case 15, '*Villa Sonia',* one of the six case studies. Most of the upgrading of these open spaces was undertaken under the municipality's programmes OSP or OPC. Some design and construction similarities are observed, due to the fact that these programmes usually employed the same building specifications and urban furniture for their projects.



Villa Sonia Park
Case 15

Americas Park
Case 18

Gran Yomasa Park
Case 27

La Marichuela Park
Case 33

Tequendama Park
Case 35

Figure 4.9: Parks with no *cancha*: group 1

Parks without *cancha*: group 2. Size or topography are the main reasons that these parks lack a '*cancha*'. Case 51, '*Los Cerezos',* which is also one of the six case studies, is too narrow and relatively steep to make it a natural place for a *'cancha'*, and the residents – by their own testimony – also wanted something quieter and calmer (as will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6). Case 50 is a corner site not far from case 51, which has been developed by the community into a pleasant little spot to sit and relax. It includes a religious statue, which forms the centrepiece of the park.

Quintas del Plan Social Park
Case 36

Quintas del Plan Social II Park
Case 37

Nueva Argentina II Park
Case 50

Los Cerezos Park
Case 51

Figure 4.10: Parks with no *cancha*: group 2

Streets and stairways: group 1. Four of these cases are stairways, and two are street improvements. The stairways also include platforms used as additional play and rest areas: case 5, for example, has a platform used as a playground, while in case 6 the platform provides a viewpoint for the city. Case 1 is a small street modification that improves the access to the surrounding houses, and case 12 is a modest project to upgrade part of the pavement and the connection to the *barrio*.

Figure 4.11: Streets and stairways: group 1

Streets and stairways: group 2. This second and last group consists of seven cases of streets and stairways. Three (17, 45 and 55) consist of improvements to streets, while the other four include streets and stairways. Different levels of consolidation are observed in each settlement. Cases 17, 29 and 46 are located in more developed areas, and this is also observed in their open spaces.

San Martin Pedestrian Street C. 17 Libano Pedestrian Street C. 29 La Castaña Stairway C. 44

San Martin de Loba Boulevard C.45 Guacamayas Stairway C.46 Bello Horizonte Street Stairway C.47

El Consuelo Boulevard-Stairwav C.55

Figure 4.12: Streets and stairways: group 2

Community room. This single case, number 21, is the improvement of the community hall in *'La Aldea' barrio*. This meeting room is located in a central position within the park, and it may be considered as forming part of it, as one of its facilities. The activities developed in the community hall are largely related to the park, and the park is arguably an extension of the building and vice-versa.

La Aldea Community Room C.21

Figure 4.13: Community room

Facade embellishment. The two cases falling within this group are located in *Usme*. They were developed under a municipal programme which aimed at improving open spaces in the *barrios*. In this regard, open spaces are seen not only as features of the urban setting, but also as impacting the surrounding buildings which frame the outdoor

San Isidro Facades C.41 Usme Centro Facades C.42

Figure 4.14: Facade embellishment

4.5 The 6 Detailed Case Studies

4.5.1 Parque Danubio (Danubio Park)

This park has the same name as the *barrio* in which it is situated – Danubio in *Usme* locality (case 40). It has two multi-functional sports fields for five-a-side football and basketball, one playground and several paved and green zones which include items of urban furniture. It is one of the few parks in the *barrio*, but it is the biggest and the one with the most activity. The park is located at one edge of the *barrio*, over a former stream and its environs, and has a very steep topography. Principal Danubio settlement features are:

- It was developed on public and private land invaded in the 1980s.
- It was legalised (land tenure 'solved' – as a settlement – and public services provided) in 1994.
- Approximately half the plots have ownership titles.
- The *barrio* ranges between low and medium levels of consolidation, with some very deprived areas, especially near this park.
- The *barrio* consists of 541 plots, which accommodate around 10,000 people.

The *barrio* has a good economic and social dynamic, and a large number of people work and socialise within it. There are many shops, bakeries, restaurants, internet and phone shops, supermarkets and so on. There are also several social associations and community groups, where people work or spend their time. There are three different churches: Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Jehovah's Witnesses; and all organise activities. There is also a large number of bars (perhaps too many, in the view of some residents), where people drink, especially on Fridays and Saturdays. This activity is important for open spaces because the custom is to buy beer in the bar, then, weather permitting, to take the bottles out into the street or park to drink with friends.

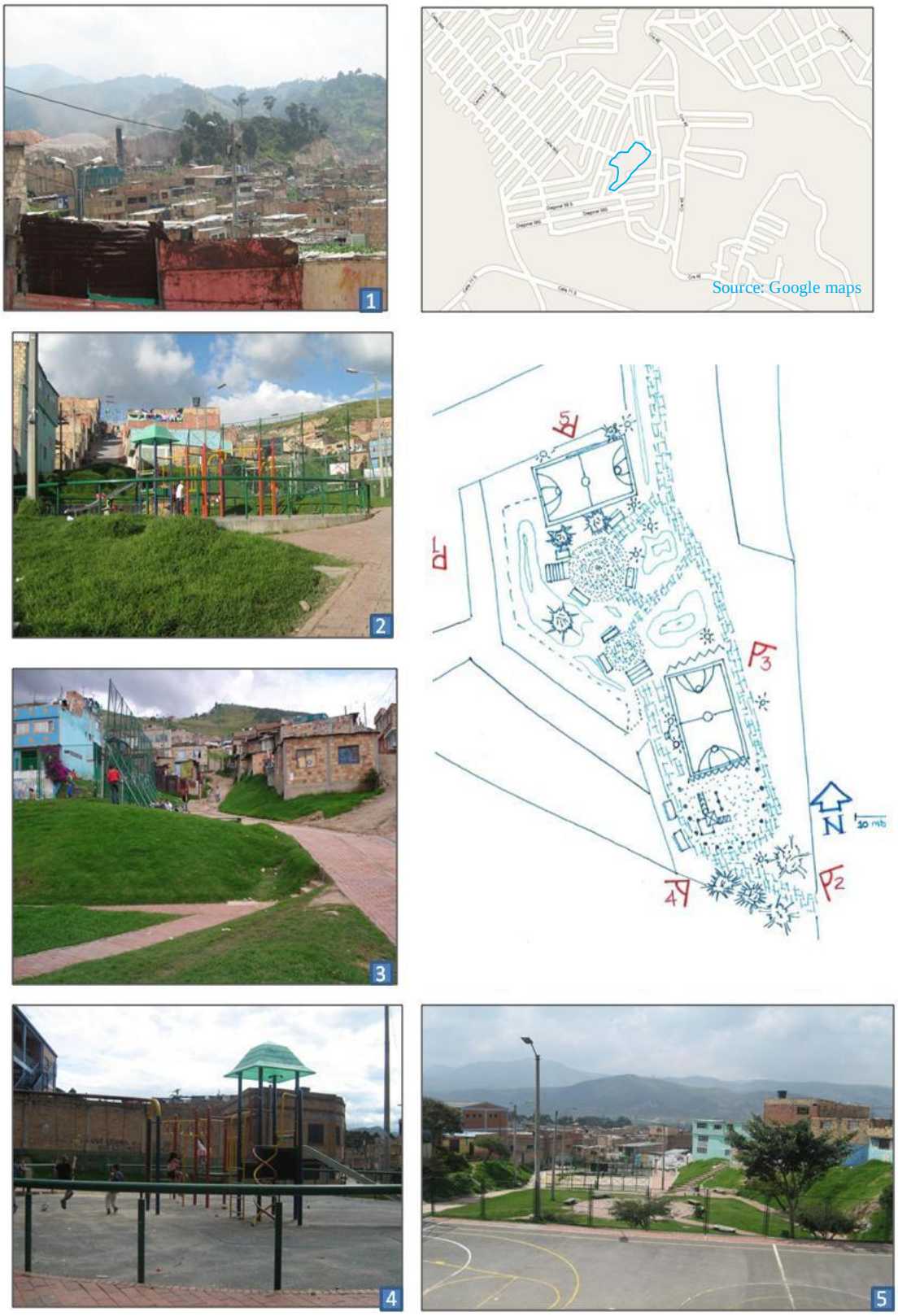


Figure 4.15: Danubio park

Community leaders have done a lot for this *barrio*, as is frequently the case in Bogotá. The role of JAC presidents has been crucial since the early beginnings, extending beyond the legalisation of the *barrio* to other physical and social improvements, including the park. Community leaders including *Doña* Maria, *Don* Aniceto, *Don* Ramon, and in more recent times *Don* Jose and *Don* Arturo, have pushed the interests of the community and have applied to government bodies for what was needed.

The park is the biggest open space in the *barrio* and the most often used in terms of recreation; however, the main street is busier in terms of commercial activities and social interactions. The park is totally surrounded by houses, but has no surrounding streets, which is rather unusual. Location within the *barrio* and its topography also make this park distinctive. The park's location is in fact peripheral to the settlement and it is not easily observable from 'outside'. The topography is not only steep, but also undulating, and in this regard the park is made up of several terraces which support its facilities. The earth-moving activities needed to construct the park were considerable; and even more remarkable for the fact that they were undertaken by the community, as will be explained in the following chapter.

4.5.2 Parque Los Cerezos (Los Cerezos Park)

Los Cerezos (cherry tree)[15] park is located in the *barrio Manuela Beltran*, in the *Ciudad Bolivar* locality (case 51). This is what people call a 'passive park', meaning that it has no sports field. The park includes two small playgrounds, some paved areas with benches and several paths connecting the park with the surrounding streets. The unique quantity of greenery observed, including trees, gardens and green areas, is perhaps the main characteristic of Los Cerezos. Principal features of the settlement are:

[15] The park owes its name to the cherry trees that grow in the upper part.

- It began in the 1980s as a formal land development on the initiative of the priest Saturnino Sepulveda (a famous 'social developer' in Bogotá).
- Urban facilities and public services were initially developed by the community up to the point, several years later, when they were formally connected to municipal services by public companies.
- Housing was developed through self-help and self-build practices.
- The *barrio* is currently relatively well consolidated and no vacant plots are found; however, houses and urban spaces are still being upgraded.
- According to the JAC, it consists of 471 plots, accommodating about 2,500 inhabitants.
- Title deeds for individual plots cover nearly 95% of the area (although it was a formal development, the land was communal property).
- It has a steep topography, as do most *barrios* in *Ciudad Bolivar*.

Manuela Beltran is a special *barrio* within Bogotá; it has gained this status because of its history of struggle and triumph. It offered an alternative model to land invasion or pirate urbanisation, and it also followed a different pattern: a communal and cooperative one. A large number of the current residents have lived through this story from its beginning, and it is a source of considerable pride (they, for example, do not like to be confused with a nearby area called *Jerusalen*). Those who arrived later do not know much about it, neither are they particularly interested to learn. This duality is also observed in the *barrio* dynamics: the upper part (referring to the topography) is more traditional and quieter than the lower part. It is also less active in terms of economic activities on the streets and more of the original residents still live there. In contrast, the lower part is active and particularly commercial, and has undergone a greater transformation in terms of houses and residents through the years. Los Cerezos park is located in the upper part; while another *barrio* park, with two multi-purpose pitches and community facilities (the community meeting room, the health care centre and the school) is situated in the lower part.

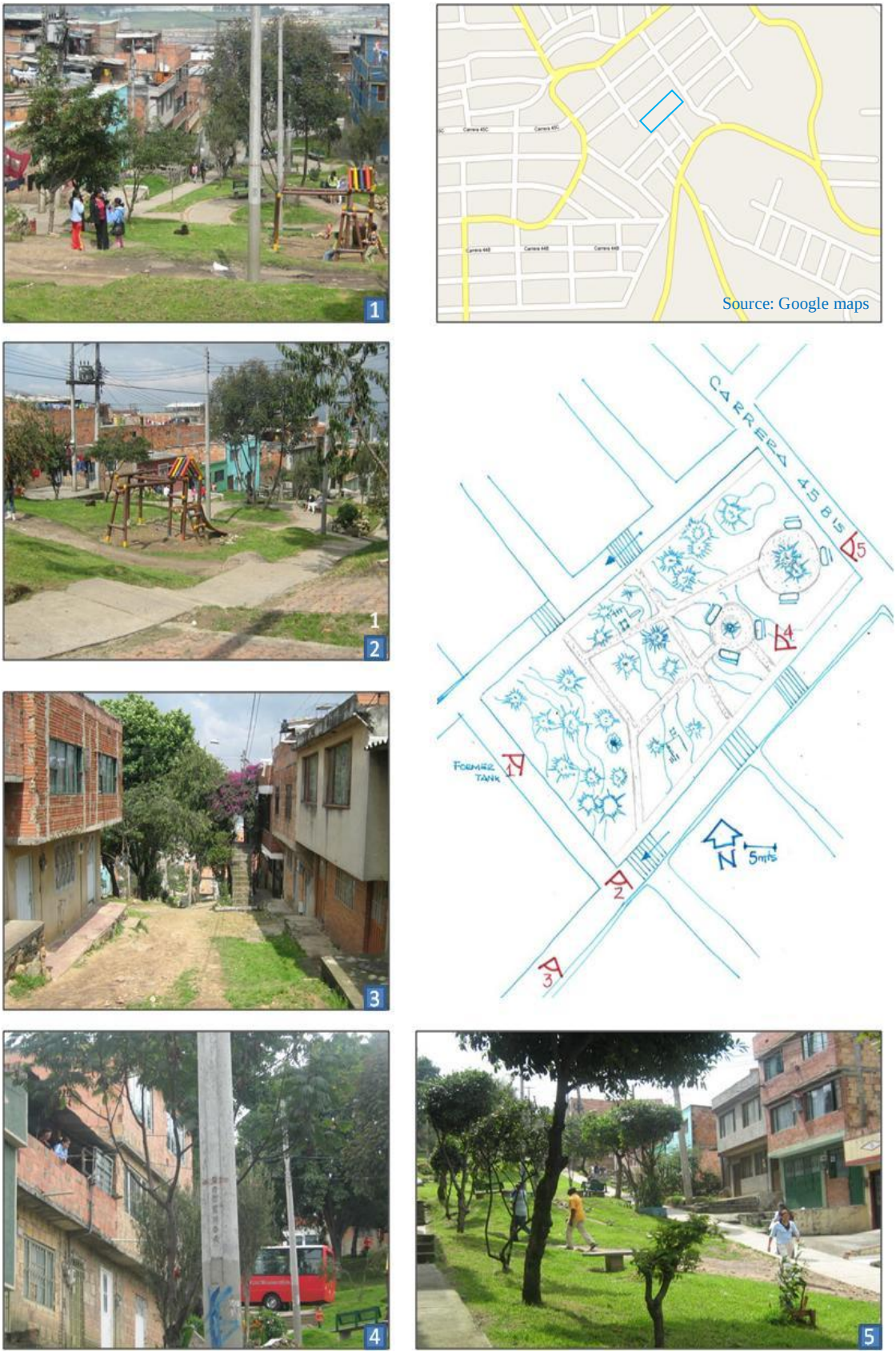


Figure 4.16: Los Cerezos park

Los Cerezos park is a rectangular, sloping park of around 80 metres in length and 20 metres width. Two of its edges are composed exclusively of housing, while another is a vehicular street (fronted by houses and commercial enterprises), and the fourth consists of a community building that is awaiting development (it used to be a high water tank – *tanque alto* – for dispensing water to the *barrio* by gravity, but when water was laid on by the municipal water company, the tank became obsolete, and since then there has been some notion of converting it into a community facility, but nothing has been so far undertaken). There is no '*tienda*' on any of the three immediate borders of the park, which is rather unusual; however, one hosts a community facility – in fact, a community nursery (*hogar de bienestar).*[16] On the fourth edge of the park, formed by the vehicular street, there is a type of '*tienda'* – a '*miscelanea*' (general store) – which generates an interesting exchange with the park: people buy ice cream there to eat in the park. A similar kind of transaction occurs with the bakery just around the corner.

Los Cerezos park is a quiet and calm place amid the frantic activity of its surroundings. It has a significant history that is treasured and passed on by those founder members of the *barrio* who still live in the settlement.

4.5.3 Parque Villa Sonia (Villa Sonia Park)

This park has the same name as the *barrio* in which it is located, Villa Sonia, in the *Bosa* locality (case 15). It is a small park, with a playground and a small 'flexible' area used mainly for playing football; but it is not big enough for five-a-side football, nor does it have goal posts. It has three benches and a loudspeaker at the top of a post, which is used for playing music and to make announcements. It does not have any trees or green space, although this is normal for the locality. The *barrio* main features are:

[16] Also called '*madre comunitaria'* (community mother). This is a community nursery provision which provides basic care for young children by engaging women of the *barrios* to do this job in exchange for a fee. The association of these '*madres*' is one of the most influential women's groups in the *barrios* (see more in Kellett and Garnham 1995).

- It grew from a site-and-services public project in the mid 1990s. Families were sold a plot of 6 x 12 meters, which was (and still is) developed through self-help and self-build practices.
- Houses in the *barrio* are relatively well consolidated compared to others; most are two storeys high; however, three and four storey houses are also observed.
- The urban space is not so well consolidated, especially the streets, tarmac being limited to main routes only, and few having any pavements.
- *Barrio* topography is completely flat, which is also a consequence of its site: this is the type of terrain found in the Western part of the city.

The *barrio* has the air of a purely residential area, calm and quiet, apart from the park loudspeaker which broadcasts music at weekends. It is atypical in this regard, because most of the *barrios* tend to be commercial and noisy. Reasons for this may lie in the size of the settlement and its proximity to other areas which fulfil commercial and entertainment requirements. On the other hand, sociable exchanges and young children's recreation take place within the *barrio*. The park and the streets are good places to play and meet neighbours, as virtually no cars pass, while the few that do go slowly because of the roads condition.

The park is nearly square in shape; it measures about 20 metres on one side and 25 metres on the other. It borders three vehicular streets and one row of houses; the streets are almost traffic-free and the houses are almost 'inside' the park (causing problems for the residents, as will be explained later). The neighbouring houses are relatively well consolidated and continue to expand, with three and four storeys. The park does not have any green spaces, being partly tarmacked over, and partly paved with ceramic blocks. A playground with metal furniture and surrounded by a similarly metallic veranda is found on one side of the park, and on the other side there is a flat tarmacked area bordered on two sides by railings which children use to play football and other ball games. There are also three metal-and-cement benches, a couple of metal rubbish bins and a few lampposts. The loudspeaker is placed atop one of those.

Figure 4.17: Villa Sonia park

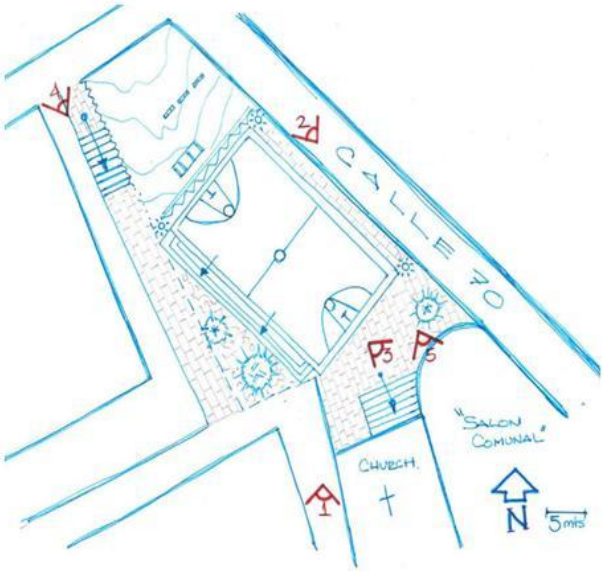
4.5.4 Parque Nueva Argentina (Nueva Argentina Park)

Nueva Argentina park (case 49) is located in the *barrio* of the same name. It is situated in the area call *Jerusalen,*[17] in the *Ciudad Bolivar* locality. This park is bordered with community facilities, and on one side is a street relatively busy with traffic and commercial activities (*calle* 70). It has a multi-purpose pitch and a playground set in a small green area. Amongst its communal facilities, there is a Catholic church, an Evangelical church, a community room (*salón communal*) and a community canteen (*comedor comunitario*[18]). The key characteristics are:

- It was developed on private land invaded in the 1980s
- The whole area (*Jerusalen*) was legalised in 1989; however in 2000 development was suspended owing to the demands of owners seeking compensation. Since then, a juridical process has started and some areas (not even whole *barrios*) have been legalised. The process is still ongoing.
- Title deeds reach around 25% of individual plots
- There are no vacant plots to be found, and the houses and urban space are still being upgraded.
- There are about 700 plots accommodating 3,500 inhabitants (JAC data).

The *barrio* is divided into three parts by its topography, and each part tends to have a different dynamic. The upper and the lower parts tend to be residential, and are more connected with their neighbouring *barrios* than with the central area of the settlement. The third part is the central one or *calle* 70, hosting commercial activities, entertainment and recreational outlets, including the park and the community facilities. The area gains an appearance of bustle and activity from its shops, the concourse of buses along the street, people using the community facilities – especially the community canteen and the community room – and the many pedestrians. However, the park, which is located at the centre of this area, lacks a similar dynamism.

[17] *Jerusalen* consists of 9 *barrios*, including *Nueva Argentina*. They all share the same contested origins, which have been extensively documented. See for example Chaparro and Niño (1998).
[18] '*Comedor comunitario'* is a municipal programme which delivers lunches and snacks free or at subsidised rates to poor areas of the city. It is especially aimed at children and teenagers. See more in www.idipron.gov.co



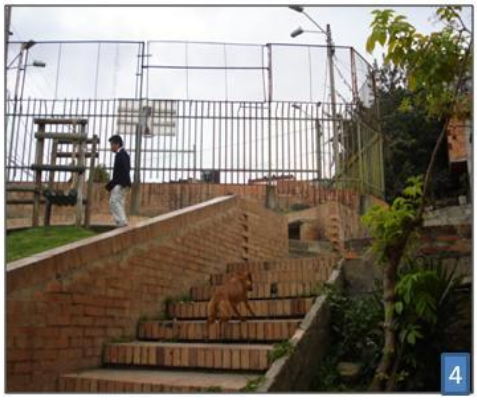


Figure 4.18: Nueva Argentina park

The park is located on *calle* 70, but because of the topography it does not connect directly with the street: at only one point is it possible to gain access to it from the street, while the rest of the park (one block's length) abuts the street with a wall. The park is a complex of community buildings and open spaces. The complex occupies a relatively large area (compared to some others found in the *barrios*), the buildings being situated in the upper part while the pitch and the green area are in the lower. Vehicular streets border the complex on three sides, while on the fourth the street is narrow and in a state of disrepair – not suitable for cars. The park has one multi-purpose pitch, which scarcely fits into the area provided. At the bottom of the pitch there is a small green area on a slope, where there is a tiny wooden playground and a few sections of tyre set in the ground to play with. The community complex is next to it, but it does not have a direct relationship with the park; its doors and windows look out onto the streets. The different areas of the park are also separated by its topography, with a drop of about 5 metres between its highest and lowest points.

Several accounts have evolved in this *barrio* and in this park as to how people have come to achieve an improvement in their living standards to the extent that they have. The residents' struggle for their open spaces form part of the story, figuring parks such as Nueva Argentina or Tanque Laguna (which will be discussed in chapter 5*)*. The development of *Nueva Argentina*, and the *Jerusalen* area as a whole, has been a collective effort, and although it has not been easy, it has demonstrated a large community involvement and commitment.

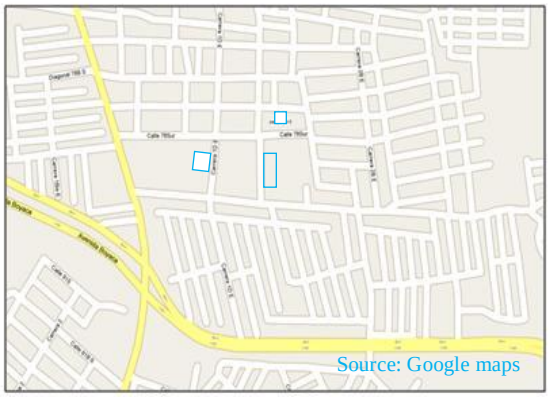
4.5.5 Parques de La Andrea (La Andrea Parks)

The La Andrea case study (number 22) deals with three interconnected parks. They are located in the *barrio* of the same name in the *Usme* locality. The parks, '*sector*' (phase) 1, 2 and 3 correspond to three different stages of the *barrio*. '*Sector*' 1 is the *barrio* main park, the one where the '*inter-barrios'* basketball championships are held and special cultural activities are laid on, and where the community meeting room (*salón communal*) is placed. '*Sector*' 2 is the '*polideportivo*' (multi-functional indoor facility); it is not defined as a *barrio* park (in the urban policy), but as a

locality park. '*Sector*' 3, or '*el ocho'*, is a communal park. It has a playground, green and paved areas, flower beds and a small '*media torta'* (amphitheatre) for community gatherings, among other facilities. Principal characteristics of the settlement are:

- It started as a formal land development in the 1980s, with private housing schemes and individual plot developments.
- Today, the *barrio* is relatively well-consolidated and no vacant plots are found; however, housing improvement and open space upgrades are ongoing activities.
- The first phase (sector 1) is the closest to Caracas Avenue (one of the most commercial areas of the *Usme* locality), and it is also the most consolidated, the busiest and the most populated. As with the other two phases, it was generated from an urban plan (design) which organised the built and open spaces, including the park; however, it is difficult at the present time to distinguish the original urban design from the numerous additions and changes that have been carried out since. The same applies to the dwellings, most of which have clearly been improved, making it difficult to determine which ones have been upgraded from a housing scheme, and which from a progressive plot development.
- Phases 2 and 3 have been developed in a similar way: formal housing schemes hand in hand with 'informal' individual plot development, and both very much transformed. However, in these two phases there are some medium rise apartment projects (3-4 storey buildings) with few changes. Phases 2 and 3 are not as commercial as phase 1, and several schools have been placed here to serve the whole area.

The Phase 1 park has a street with car-only access at one border, a vehicular and pedestrian street at another, and two pedestrian-only streets at either end. The park has a multi-purpose sports field in the middle, with some concrete seats to one side, a playground with children's attractions, and a relatively big parking space by the side of the cars-only street. The two-storey community room is placed in one corner of the park, and there are plenty of green spaces, several trees, some benches and pathways crossing the park in all directions.



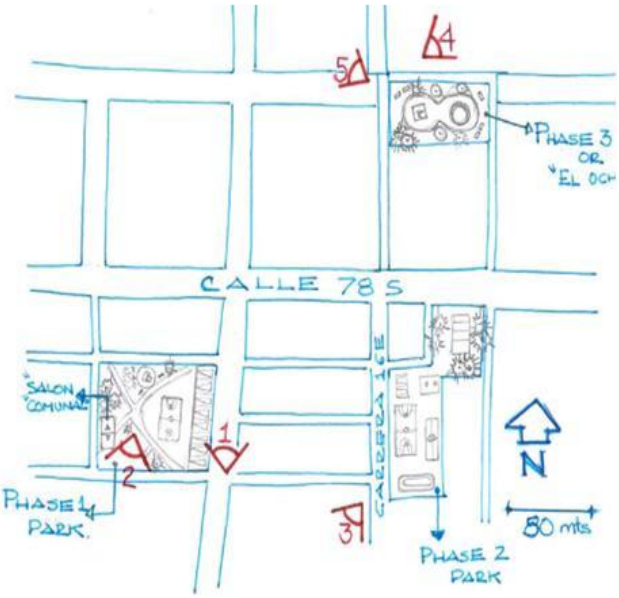


Figure 4.19: La Andrea parks

The phase 2 park is similar in size to phase 1, but is not of a regular form, having rather the appearance of one small square that has been added to a larger one. Although similar in size, this park is very different in terms of physical appearance and use: as has been mentioned before, this is a locality park and it is directly administered by the municipality. On first viewing, what is most striking are the railings that surround and guard the entrance. As expected, there is no interaction between the surrounding streets and the park, and almost no commercial activities have been developed there. The park has two multi-purpose pitches, one open air and one indoors with seating facilities (*polideportivo*). It also has a skating rink, a playground with good furniture, several gardens, paths and benches.

The phase 3 park falls within the 'interior' category (it does not have a street as a border), it is 'passive' (no *cancha*), and small – a 'pocket' park (as it is called in urban policy). There is a three-storey housing development on one border, while two borders host two-storey housing schemes, and the remaining border exhibits progressive individual plot development. Only in the three-storey housing are the buildings unchanged, while on the other three borders, especially the progressive development part, buildings on some plots have risen up to four and five storeys. The '*ocho*' (number eight) park - the name was given to it by the community because of the form of its pathways - has a playground, colourful flower beds with benches around them, a small '*media torta*' (amphitheatre), and several paths for walking, skating and cycling.

4.5.6 Parques de Aguas Claras (Aguas Claras Parks)

This case study (number 48) comprises the parks and streets of Aguas Claras. The settlement is located on the south east border of Bogotá, in the *San Cristobal* locality in the eastern mountains. In this respect, streets and parks relate closely to the surrounding mountains, and to some extent the mountains could be said to form part of the *barrio* open spaces. As a further consequence of this location, topography and greenery are two distinctive characteristics of the settlement and its streets and parks. Other important features of the *barrio* are:

- It grew from pirate urbanisation, starting at the end of the 1980s.
- The settlement has not yet been legalised, and it is a matter of dispute between municipal, regional and national governmental bodies.
- According to the JAC president, the *barrio* was legalised in 1994, but some regional and national offices challenged the legalisation, and it was reversed. The reason is the long dispute concerning the Eastern Mountains of Bogotá (eastern border of the city) which centres on the established convention that no building development on the mountain can go beyond a certain altitude. Aguas Claras, like other *barrios*, is beyond this limit, as are a number of expensive houses in the north of the city. The logic is that all buildings over that limit have to be either legalised or demolished.
- Water, sewerage and rubbish collection are provided by community organisations, while electricity and telephones are taken care of by the municipal companies.
- According to the JAC, more than 300 families live in the *barrio*, which means around 1,500 people.

The open spaces in Aguas Claras comprise the streets and two parks. Among the streets, there is one which attracts a greater number of people and activities. This is the main street, which is also entrance and egress route for the *barrio*, and it ends at the final bus stop at the very end of the settlement and the city. It extends for approximately 400 metres, and does not include tarmac, only an unpaved surface. Most of the shops of the *barrio* are located here, as are also the existing and the planned churches. It is the most developed area of the settlement, and the place where some of the most consolidated houses are to be seen. The other streets do not offer equivalent levels of activity and physical consolidation; rather they work as connectors to the main street and between the various built-up areas of the settlement.

The parks are located in unused space. The small park is under high voltage cables (no houses can be built underneath) in an undefined urban layout within the

settlement, while the larger one is at one limit of the *barrio*, where the sheer rise of the mountainside begins. The urban furniture in the small park consists of a wooden playground, in a very deteriorated state, and the larger park has a metal playground and a multi-functional pitch enclosed within a green railing. Both parks have undefined limits: it is not clear where each park begins or ends.

As noted earlier, topography is an important issue. The mountains with their 'majestic' green slopes rise up behind the houses, and the view is one of the best in the city, as one resident pointed out. But the location also adds another element: the climate, which is extremely windy compared to the rest of the city, and therefore colder. This also has an impact on how people relate to their open spaces.

Figure 4.20: Aguas Claras parks

4.6 Conclusions

This chapter has introduced the research settings and case studies. After providing general information about Colombia and Bogotá as the physical and social context of this study, the chapter moved on to examine popular settlements in the city. This section discussed how they started and grew to become a consistent part of the urban fabric in the 1970s and 1980s, a situation that holds today. Also explored were the policies and programmes that aim to address these settlements, and which to some extent have been oriented towards preventing new popular settlements from appearing, as well as helping to organise the existing ones. Arguably, the first objective has not been met, and looks problematic in terms of future realisation, while the second trend has produced some interesting developments which are discussed in the course of the thesis; although there is still much room for improvement. The chapter then moved on to examine open spaces in popular settlements in Bogotá from the relatively limited information available. The policies and programmes which are relevant to these spaces were also introduced, revealing some interesting ideas and significant initiatives, but also indicating some concerns.

The chapter presented the 57 general cases and the six detailed case studies used for this research. The 57 cases were explained in general terms, including layout sketches and photographs for the purpose of illustration. The six case studies were explained with broad information regarding the settlements in which they are situated, along with basic physical and social features of the selected open spaces. A layout map and photographs were included in each case to provide graphic data to help in understanding the themes presented and to give an overall idea of the case. More data and photographs are to be found in the chapters to come, when the specific subjects of this research are discussed.

The next three chapters will examine how residents of popular settlements interact physically and socially with open spaces, from their production and transformation, to their functional and symbolic uses based on everyday relationships. The form and

design language will also be observed, along with the meanings that can be inferred from this materiality and the whole people-place interaction process.

5.1 Introduction

Open spaces in popular settlements, like housing, are largely produced and transformed by the users – the people themselves – but by contrast with housing, there is limited information and understanding about how this process is accomplished. This first chapter of analysis addresses the first question of this research, inquiring into the process of these spaces in terms of how they are designed, built, managed, transformed and sustained, along with the role of locals and other actors. Using the literature review presented in chapter two as a framework for the analysis, this chapter has been developed from the fieldwork data for the six case studies and 57 cases from previous research works undertaken by the author, as explained in chapters three and four. For the purposes of analysis, the 57 cases will provide general information on the themes and may indicate tendencies in some of them. The six case studies will offer detailed accounts that help in further understanding the themes.

The production of open space in the *barrios* is principally led by the settlers; it can be said that the space 'is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations' (Lefebvre 1991: 286). The social production and construction of space are intrinsically related, where construction can be understood as the transformation of space through people's social exchanges with the space (Low 1996). In addition, Harvey argues that production and consumption work in a dialectical relationship; furthermore, he also suggests that production and product work reciprocally (Harvey 1996: 21). It can be argued, therefore, that production, consumption and language are part of the same unity, and in popular settlements this unity could be even clearer because the involvement of the people in their own space is greater than in formal settlements. For explanatory purposes, this first analysis chapter deals with the first dimension – the production of informal open space – bearing in mind, however, the other two dimensions which will be discussed in the next two chapters.

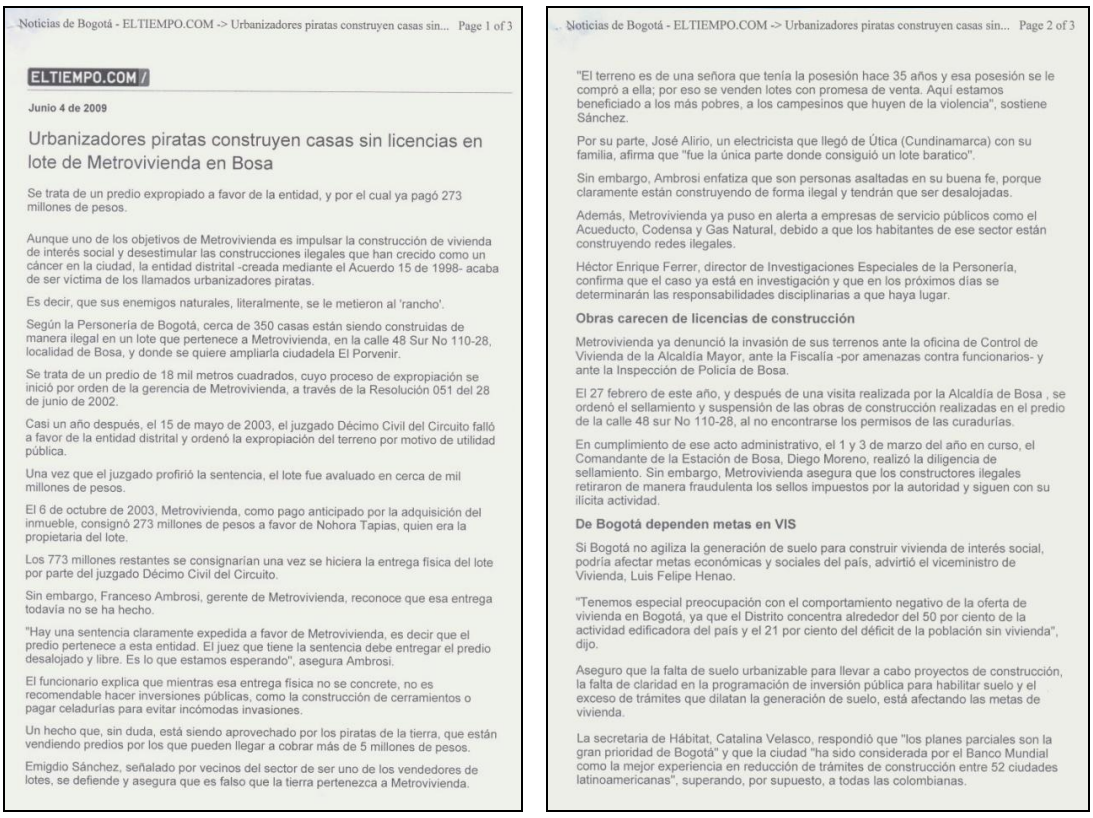
The chapter is organised into five major parts. The first section explores the main issues influencing the social production of informal urban space, bringing together the literature with experience in the field. The second part discusses the organisational process, from the origins of the *barrio* and the settlers' initial vision in relation to open space, to the first individual - and community - initiatives which start the development process. The latter aspect is detailed in the third part, explaining the first stages which vary from case to case, taking in the consolidation stages and going on to deal with how design, construction and maintenance is carried out. The fourth section examines the actors who take part in the production of space, discussing their roles and aims, and the kinds of conflicts that may arise. The fifth segment explores in detail two themes which are important in the development process: the defence of open space, which has been a permanent issue since the beginnings of the space, and the permanent transformation process of upgrading. The chapter closes with a section which addresses the main ideas discussed, and presents preliminary conclusions which will be explained further in the concluding chapter.

5.2 The Social Production of Open Space

5.2.1 Production, Consumption and Product

Production, consumption and product may be seen as part of the same process. This is especially true in popular settlements, where the involvement of the people is considerable and the participation of the national and local government is relatively minimal. According to Rueda Garcia (2000) more than 50% of Bogotá has grown on an informal basis, on illegally-held land some of which also lacks housing permissions. Gradually, however, these settlements have been fully-integrated into the urban fabric, to the point where it has become almost impossible to trace their informal origins. Similarly, Kellett (2005) explains how consolidated settlements of informal origin can become indistinguishable from those that originated by formal means. This can be illustrated through the case studies, where no matter what the different *barrio* beginnings have been, the peculiarities of open spaces and their

dynamics tend to be similar, as will be discussed further on. Production of informal urban space is an ongoing process in Bogotá, with the older *barrios* put on a legal footing at the same time as new *barrios* are created (see figure 5.1):



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ELTIEMPO.COM

Junio 4 de 2009

Urbanizadores piratas construyen casas sin licencias en lote de Metrovivienda en Bosa

Se trata de un predio expropiado a favor de la entidad, y por el cual ya pagó 273 millones de pesos.

Aunque uno de los objetivos de Metrovivienda es impulsar la construcción de vivienda de interés social y desestimular las construcciones ilegales que han crecido como un cáncer en la ciudad, la entidad distrital -creada mediante el Acuerdo 15 de 1998- acaba de ser víctima de los llamados urbanizadores piratas.

Es decir, que sus enemigos naturales, literalmente, se le metieron al 'rancho'.

Según la Personería de Bogotá, cerca de 350 casas están siendo construidas de manera ilegal en un lote que pertenece a Metrovivienda, en la calle 48 Sur No 110-28, localidad de Bosa, y donde se quiere ampliaría ciudadela El Porvenir.

Se trata de un predio de 18 mil metros cuadrados, cuyo proceso de expropiación se inició por orden de la gerencia de Metrovivienda, a través de la Resolución 051 del 28 de junio de 2002.

Casi un año después, el 15 de mayo de 2003, el juzgado Décimo Civil del Circuito falló a favor de la entidad distrital y ordenó la expropiación del terreno por motivo de utilidad pública.

Una vez que el juzgado profirió la sentencia, el lote fue avaluado en cerca de mil millones de pesos.

El 6 de octubre de 2003, Metrovivienda, como pago anticipado por la adquisición del inmueble, consignó 273 millones de pesos a favor de Nohora Tapias, quien era la propietaria del lote.

Los 773 millones restantes se consignarían una vez se hiciera la entrega física del lote por parte del juzgado Décimo Civil del Circuito.

Sin embargo, Franceso Ambrosi, gerente de Metrovivienda, reconoce que esa entrega todavía no se ha hecho.

"Hay una sentencia claramente expedida a favor de Metrovivienda, es decir que el predio pertenece a esta entidad. El juez que tiene la sentencia debe entregar el predio desalojado y libre. Es lo que estamos esperando", asegura Ambrosi.

El funcionario explica que mientras esa entrega física no se concrete, no es recomendable hacer inversiones públicas, como la construcción de cerramientos o pagar celadurías para evitar incómodas invasiones.

Un hecho que, sin duda, está siendo aprovechado por los piratas de la tierra, que están vendiendo predios por los que pueden llegar a cobrar más de 5 millones de pesos.

Emigdio Sánchez, señalado por vecinos del sector de ser uno de los vendedores de lotes, se defiende y asegura que es falso que la tierra pertenezca a Metrovivienda.

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"El terreno es de una señora que tenía la posesión hace 35 años y esa posesión se le compró a ella; por eso se venden lotes con promesa de venta. Aquí estamos beneficiado a los más pobres, a los campesinos que huyen de la violencia", sostiene Sánchez.

Por su parte, José Alirio, un electricista que llegó de Útica (Cundinamarca) con su familia, afirma que "fue la única parte donde consiguió un lote baratico".

Sin embargo, Ambrosi enfatiza que son personas asaltadas en su buena fe, porque claramente están construyendo de forma ilegal y tendrán que ser desalojadas.

Además, Metrovivienda ya puso en alerta a empresas de servicio públicos como el Acueducto, Codensa y Gas Natural, debido a que los habitantes de ese sector están construyendo redes ilegales.

Héctor Enrique Ferrer, director de Investigaciones Especiales de la Personería, confirma que el caso ya está en investigación y que en los próximos días se determinarán las responsabilidades disciplinarias a que haya lugar.

Obras carecen de licencias de construcción

Metrovivienda ya denunció la invasión de sus terrenos ante la oficina de Control de Vivienda de la Alcaldía Mayor, ante la Fiscalía -por amenazas contra funcionarios- y ante la Inspección de Policía de Bosa.

El 27 febrero de este año, y después de una visita realizada por la Alcaldía de Bosa , se ordenó el sellamiento y suspensión de las obras de construcción realizadas en el predio de la calle 48 sur No 110-28, al no encontrarse los permisos de las curadurías.

En cumplimiento de ese acto administrativo, el 1 y 3 de marzo del año en curso, el Comandante de la Estación de Bosa, Diego Moreno, realizó la diligencia de sellamiento. Sin embargo, Metrovivienda asegura que los constructores ilegales retiraron de manera fraudulenta los sellos impuestos por la autoridad y siguen con su ilícita actividad.

De Bogotá dependen metas en VIS

Si Bogotá no agiliza la generación de suelo para construir vivienda de interés social, podría afectar metas económicas y sociales del país, advirtió el viceministro de Vivienda, Luis Felipe Henao.

"Tenemos especial preocupación con el comportamiento negativo de la oferta de vivienda en Bogotá, ya que el Distrito concentra alrededor del 50 por ciento de la actividad edificadora del país y el 21 por ciento del déficit de la población sin vivienda", dijo.

Aseguro que la falta de suelo urbanizable para llevar a cabo proyectos de construcción, la falta de claridad en la programación de inversión pública para habilitar suelo y el exceso de trámites que dilatan la generación de suelo, está afectando las metas de vivienda.

La secretaria de Hábitat, Catalina Velasco, respondió que "los planes parciales son la gran prioridad de Bogotá" y que la ciudad "ha sido considerada por el Banco Mundial como la mejor experiencia en reducción de trámites de construcción entre 52 ciudades latinoamericanas", superando, por supuesto, a todas las colombianas.

Figure 5.1: The 'informal' dynamics of the city
'Pirate developers build houses with no planning permissions in Metrovivienda's [municipality office] land, in Bosa District [south west of Bogota]'. 4 June, 2009.
Source: www.eltiempo.com

Low (1996) explains how the social production of space includes social, economic, ideological and technological factors which are somehow present in the materiality created, in this case, open spaces. In this regard, the space is a consequence of the context in terms of physical and social terms. However, place is also a consequence of the interactions with people, what Low (1996) calls the social construction of space. Place users transform the space by the act of using it, functionally and symbolically. Social production and construction of space appear to be clearly manifest in open spaces in popular settlements, where the materiality observed can be linked to the residents, a factor that will be examined in this and the succeeding two chapters.

In this regard, Romero, Mesias *et al*. (2004) believe the production of habitat in popular settlements in Latin America is in the hands of the people, and far from being a problem, this is an alternative. They argue that the production of habitat by the people is a theoretical and practical concept that needs to be better understood and integrated into policy and resources in order to boost the people's efforts. The works of Brillembourg, Feireiss, *et al*. (2005) on informal settlements in Caracas go even further, arguing that these settlements can actually provide important lessons in terms of richness, inventiveness and achievement. The case then, is about gaining a 'new' understanding of those settlements, maybe re-imagining them as Hernandez and Kellett (2010) propose, or reconceptualising them as Beardsley and Werthmann (2008) argue. This research sets out to contribute in this direction.

5.2.2 Community Involvement and Place-making

Carmona, Heath *et al.* (2003) identify eight key actors in the production of urban space: developers, landowners, funders and investors, development advisers, builders, occupiers, the public sector and the community. In popular settlements the community is the leading actor developing most of the roles that Carmona, Heath *et al*. describe. The other principal actor, both with regard to its actions and its omissions, is the municipality. The consequences of community involvement in the production of informal open spaces will be discussed through the analysis of the cases; however, some general ideas are first presented here, in order to illustrate the analysis that takes place later on. First, and in line with what has been previously discussed, community involvement in the creation and transformation of its own habitat proceeds with the involvement of other actors, especially the municipality. There is a dialectic between community and municipality in the production of informal space. Second, people act individually, collectively, or as a community. Using the term 'community' to define an organised and structured action towards the production of space is not always appropriate, but serves to describe a group of people who share some characteristics, including the place where they live.

Similarly, involvement is used here to identify the two main ways in which communities engage with the production of their environment: collective action and community participation. In this research, the first is found more often than the second; however, participation carries theoretical and policy implications that need to be taken into consideration, especially in the Colombian context. Third, there are other actors in this process, their significance emerging in relation to each particular case. It can be argued that the production of informal space is about community involvement and the relationship with other actors.

Arising from the above explanation, there are two concepts that require clarification: community participation and collective action. Community can be an elusive term that can mean many things or anything: 'the diversity of criteria around the concept of community is notable' (Garcia, Giuliani *et al*. 1999: 727). In general, it seems to be a way of classifying a group of people with certain shared characteristics - of ethnicity, age, or gender - for example, or who share a location, along with social, economic and cultural characteristics as in the case of the *barrios*. The main idea is that of common characteristics, which can imply also common objectives and a common future. Peattie (1998: 247) argues that 'community invites us to attend to elements of permanence and stability via the collective subject represented by community leaders'; however, she questions the permanence and stability of community, and proposes the term 'conviviality' instead: 'conviviality points to the social energy in all sorts of small or dissenting manifestations'. Garcia, Giuliani *et al*. (1999: 729) identify 'two major sets of characteristics of community definitions: a) structural characteristics made up of the people and the physical environment in which these people live; and b) functional characteristics that are the existential processes of the community (i.e., everything that happens as a result of the interaction between the individuals and their environment)'. It can be argued, then, that community has a strong reference to a place and can develop different functional relationships among people and in relation to that place. However, these relationships are not always structured, stable and permanent; and vary according to the diversity of the people within the community. In this respect and in the case of this research, different communities with different agendas can be found in the *barrios*, from relatively structured and politically visible ones such as the '*juntas de*

accion communal – community action committees (JACs) – to social and cultural groups (Jaramillo, Hataya *et al*. 1996).

The other clarificatory terms used are community participation and collective action. Participation evokes order, political channels and, more remotely, democracy. Collective action is a more 'modest' concept, with the mere fact of taking part probably being sufficient as a definition. The issue of participation in the production and transformation of urban environments has been studied for years, and its formal origin can be traced back to the 60s and 70s with the manifestation of community movements and representatives around the world, where people's role in residential issues was noted (Hernandez 2007). Debate as to whether it is a good or a bad practice goes back almost as far, as is discussed in chapter two, the term evoking different arguments and passions. Ideally 'participation ensures that everyone involved has a stake in the outcome and that therefore they have some measure of control over it' (Hamdi 1991: 75). In practice, this is difficult to achieve: 'There is certainly little sign of participation in the sense of growing control by poor people over resources and institutions that determine their quality of life' (Gilbert and Ward 1984: 921).

Perhaps in a spirit of idealism or following other agendas, the Colombian Constitution of 1991 adopted participation as one of its pillars, and disseminated this 'doctrine' through different policy documents. In terms of urban governance, national Law number 152 of 1994 established the need for participation, and recent Bogotá Law number 448 of 2007 created and structured the municipal system of citizen participation. Laws are written, but authors such as Hataya (2007) argue that participation is still an illusion in Bogotá. In this research, community involvement is used as a general term that involves both community participation and practices of collective action; however, whenever necessary each practice is identified.

A complementary concept, which also helps to understand the different ways in which individuals and communities engage in the production and transformation of their living spaces, is place-making. Schneekloth and Shibley (1995: 1) define it as

'the way in which all of us as human beings transform the places in which we find ourselves into places in which we live'. It stresses the involvement of individuals and communities in the transformation of their own spaces, and implies the idea of place as process; in other words, space is permanently transformed to accommodate people's changing needs, expectations and possibilities. This can be observed to a large extent in the open spaces of the *barrio*, an aspect of which will be discussed in the following sections.

5.3 The Organisation Process

5.3.1 Origins and Expectations

> *Every* barrio *needs to have a* parque, *we needed to defend the plot allocated against people who wanted to invade it.*
>
> Interview with Marco Fidel, Nueva Argentina resident, 2008.

The origin of open spaces in the *barrios* is linked to the origin of the *barrio* itself, in that each has in common two characteristics: first, they usually start out as empty spaces that need to be created, appropriated and sometimes defended; and secondly, they exist in the mental plans of popular settlers: 'every *barrio* needs to have a *parque*'. The first characteristic depends largely on the origin of the *barrio* and on whether the plot for the *parque* has been allocated or not. In 'formal' origins the space for the *parque* is defined in the initial urban layout; however it is frequently nothing more than an empty area with no urban or recreational furniture. In 'pirate' urbanisations[19] or squatting areas, the area for the *parque* has to be 'negotiated' with the developer or with the community, including contestation and conflicts as will be explained further on. The second characteristic, the idea of the *parque* in people's minds, is related to the expectations of what a *barrio* should be, having in the *parque* one of the main mental plans of the dwellers. 'Physical' origins and 'mental'

[19] See chapters two and four for an explanation.

expectations of the '*parque del barrio'* will be discussed in the following sections alongside the case studies.

The *barrio* **Aguas Claras** was developed though pirate urbanisation. The developer divided the land and began selling individual plots. Open spaces were visible in the initial urban layouts that the developer showed to the people who were interested in buying the plots. People asked about where the park would be located when buying the plot, as confirmed by Rocio (Aguas Claras resident); however, their principal interest was in the plot itself. The *barrio* open spaces consist of streets and two parks. The 'big' park was an area remaining unbuilt close to the steepest part of the mountain and the 'small' park was a spare plot of land at the centre of the *barrio* under the electric cables. Housing development was not feasible for either of the two (figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Aguas Claras parks
Left: the 'small' park, under the electric cables; right: the 'big' park, by the mountainside.

The *barrio* **Danubio** grew up on land invaded by squatters in the 1980s. The first squatters started by dividing the land, occupying it, and selling plots to families and friends who came later. Danubio's open spaces followed a similar pattern to that of Aguas Claras, but this time it was the squatters who made the decisions. According to Arturo, Danubio resident and current JAC *barrio* president, streets 'were appearing' as and when they were needed to expand the settlement. *'Some settlers with knowledge of drawing helped with the initial layouts, and we also got some help from students on this job'.* Attempts were made to lay out the streets in an orthogonal pattern, but often the pattern was 'broken' by the topography. In one of these 'broken

parts', the *parque* is found. It was an empty piece of land surrounding a stream that came down from the top of the mountain (figure 5.3). As in Aguas Claras, this space was unsuitable for houses.

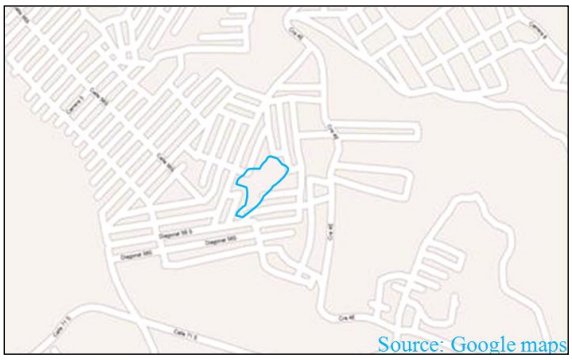

Figure 5.3: Danubio park
The location of the park in a 'broken' part of the topography and the orthogonal patterns.

Nueva Argentina, like Danubio, started out as squatted land, but in contrast to Danubio, the park's origin was contested. According to Marco Fidel (Nueva Argentina's resident), the initial urban layout developed by the first squatters indicated a plot for the park; however, later squatters did not respect this plan, and tried to invade the land several times.

Figure 5.4: Nueva Argentina park
The park is behind the fence at the right hand side of the photo.

The difference between Danubio and Aguas Claras is that the place chosen for the park was suitable for house-building. Moreover, it was located in a central area of the settlement, in a location that now enjoys considerable commercial and social

activity (figure 5.4). After several invasion attempts, the community finally managed to enclose the plot with some building materials from their own houses, until a few months later they could start laying out their first *parque.*[20] Arguably, the community were interested in their park, but only after they had first 'realised' their housing expectations.

The *barrio* Manuela Beltran, where the **Cerezos** park is situated, owes its origin to an initiative of the Catholic priest Saturnino Sepulveda in the early 1980s. According to Tito (resident and founder), in Saturnino's original design space for the park, it was laid out very much as it is today; however, another founder member disagrees: *'Houses were initially planned here, we insisted to Saturnino that it needed to be an open space, and he agreed'* (Luis Emilio interview, 2008*)*. On looking at the map of the *barrio*, a third option appears, which validates the views of both Tito and Luis Emilio. At the top of the current park is placed the water tank that provided water for the whole *barrio* until the municipal water company developed the service not so many years ago. Initially hoses and later pipes needed to get from the tank to the *barrio* underneath, and having an open space in front of it was the most practical arrangement (figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5: Los Cerezos park
The *barrio* water tank at the top of the park (on the left), with the rest of the settlement below (on the right).

The *barrio* **Villa Sonia** was developed through a site and services programme in the mid 1990s. The park started out as an empty space left by the developers as a '*cesion*

[20] The origins, struggles and achievements of certain of the *barrios* from the residents' perspective have been well-documented. See for example Accion Comunal Distrital (1998).

tipo A' (by law all new developments have to leave areas of open space, according to the size and density of the project, and the spaces left are called '*cesiones*' – surrenders of property). Similar to Danubio park but on a flat surface, Villa Sonia's park is sited at the meeting point of two differently-orientated orthogonal grids (figure 5.6); however, Villa Sonia was built to a 'formal' (professional) urban design, and Danubio to an 'informal' (non-professional) design. It can be argued, however, that the two approaches obtained similar results.

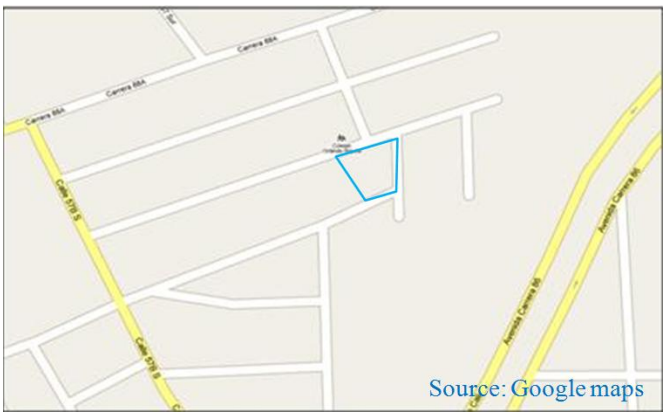

Figure 5.6: Villa Sonia park
The park is placed at grids' meeting point.

The *barrio* **La Andrea** originated from a mixture of housing projects and individual plot development. The *barrio* was developed in three phases from a 'formal' urban design, which organised the built and the open spaces, including one park for each phase (figure 5.7). Currently it is difficult to establish the original urban design as many changes can be observed. The same situation pertains to the dwellings, most of them having been improved, making it difficult to discern which have been upgraded from a 'formal house' and which from a progressive plot development.

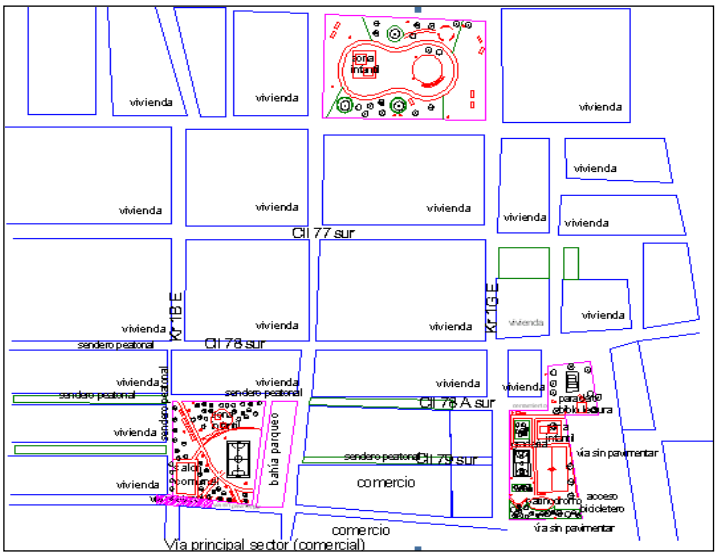

Figure 5.7: La Andrea parks
Phase 1 park: bottom left; phase 2 park: bottom right; and phase 3 park: top centre.

Phase 1 and 2 parks were formally designed by the developers; however, the phase 1 park was given to the community while the phase 2 park remained in the hands of the municipality, since it allocates recreational amenities for the whole area (locality). The phase 3 park was a cession area (see earlier explanation in Villa Sonia), and was given to the community without any design at all:

> *When we bought our properties in la Andrea phase 3, we just had in front a spare piece of land that was called 'park' in the maps. It was used as a parking place for cars and small trucks from the whole area. Because of the trucks' bringing materials for the construction of the new houses and entering through the rather narrow streets, the houses that were already built started 'to move' and cracks appeared on the walls; we knew that we had to do something about it.*
>
> Interview with Luis Murcia, La Andrea resident, 2008.

The cases illustrate the different ways in which open spaces in the *barrios* originated. They represent practical considerations in terms of their physical origins, and they also confirm the influence of people's expectations. Perhaps the most significant of these is that 'a proper settlement needs to have a *parque'*. Even when it has more 'informal' origins, the idea of the '*parque de mi barrio'* (my *barrio* park) is important. New dwellers in 'pirate' urbanisations or squatter settlements want to confirm to a large extent that the *barrio* has a park, or a space where it can later be constructed; although their first consideration is for plots on which to build their

houses. In sites with more formal origins, newcomers ask where the park is, and if possible they try to obtain plots nearby - as Idelfonso commented in Villa Sonia. It is therefore possible to argue that open spaces have a place in mental and physical plans from the settlements' very inception, and that they are important to the popular settler right from that time, challenging the idea that the house is the only significant issue for the settler. However, the improvement of open spaces comes later, as will be discussed in the following sections.

The popular settlers' expectations for a park in their *barrio* encounter both the realities of the origins of the settlement and the interests of the different actors involved. This is especially observed in the location of the park within the *barrio* and the topography. Whenever possible, as in Nueva Argentina, people prefer a central location and a not very steep topography (although most of the settlement is placed on an inclined terrain). But in Danubio and Aguas Claras, due possibly to the actors' interests being very powerful, the location of the parks is peripheral, on sites where houses cannot be built and the terrain is steep or difficult. In sites with more formal origins, such as Los Cerezos, La Andrea and Villa Sonia, location and topography is decided by actors who are not necessarily led by central/peripheral concerns, but who possibly regard the flatness of the land as their first priority. However, it is also true that more formally-initiated settlements tend to be located on flat terrains, confirming what has been said; that is, that people's expectations for the park clash with the origins of the settlement and the interests of those involved.

5.3.2 Perceptions and Visions

> *I love my barrio very much, because many things have happened to me here, for example the first football championship I ever took part in. After that, teams always ask me to play with them, it was good fun.*
>
> Interview with Rocio, Aguas Claras resident, 2008.

As stated previously, open spaces have been a feature of popular settlements from the beginning, regardless of whether the *barrio* had a formal or informal origin. But what were the settlers' initial perceptions and visions of these spaces? Niño and

Chaparro (1997) argue that the '*parque del barrio'* or *'cancha*' (*barrio* park or sports field) is very significant to the residents. Rocio (Aguas Claras resident) seems to confirm this, having good memories of her *barrio* from the sports activities in the park. This also implies that she valued the social relationships formed in the park and around football. Some authors, such as Viviescas, Gomez *et al.* (1989: 197) believe the '*cancha*' is not a proper collective space: 'in popular settlements we cannot even talk about collective spaces or squares, because they do not exist. They are replaced with a sports field'. For others, such as Beardsley and Werthmann (2008: 33), this invites reflection on open spaces in popular settlements from a different perspective: they need to be 'reconceptualised'.

From the survey of 57 open space cases, more than half have '*canchas*' that function as the *barrios* parks or collective spaces, and just about one in six are parks without sports fields (table 4.3). The table also shows other types and usages of open spaces such as streets and stairs, these last being very important because of the inclined topography of many *barrios*. Two less conventional types can also be observed: communal meeting rooms and façade embellishment initiatives, which confirm the direction of the argument of Beardsley and Werthmann (2008: 33): 'we might have to push our conceptions of public space [open space] even beyond this [recreation and contemplative open spaces], to include market facilities, community kitchens and laundries, and places for cultural expression – like Rio's samba schools'. We will come to this later, when discussing the consumption of open spaces.

Where do these perceptions and visions come from? How are they constructed? Why is open space important to the popular settler? Contrary to the common notion that housing was the settlers' only concern, open spaces were considered important from the very origins of settlements. However, attention to open spaces comes only after housing has been at least initially built up and basic arrangements for water, sewage and electricity put in place, as Hernandez Bonilla (2004) explains in *Colonias Populares* (popular settlements) in Mexico. There are two arguments that can explain the importance of these spaces: firstly, the purely practical issue of the houses' lack of indoor space; secondly, the aspirational motives of the residents. The first suggests that open space operates as a playground: 'Facilities for active

recreation are generally more suitable to informal settlements than spaces for passive occupation, especially in places with large populations of teenagers with limited educational and employment opportunities' (Beardsley and Werthmann 2008: 33). The second implies that open spaces may be understood as representing the urban, as typical of city life (Silva 1992), and as aspirational expressions: 'They adopt forward looking strategies based on optimism and aspiration, and their dwellings [and open spaces] embody future aspirations with little time for nostalgia for a rural past, rather a fascination with modern, urban, progressive images: a striving towards imagined futures' (Kellett 2009: 4). These ideas will be developed in chapter 7.

How are these perceptions and visions materialised? Or in other words, why are they materialised in the way they are? The Colonial past may form part of the explanation, for example, it may be the reason that orthogonal grids are found in most areas, even those with high slopes: 'the imposition of an urban grid in places where Spanish foundations coincided with pre-existing indigenous settlements such as Cuzco or Tenochtitlan, was particularly dramatic' (Hernandez and Kellett 2010: 2). This urban layout was intended by the *Ordenanzas* (colonial laws) of Philip II to impose a physical and social order on the indigenous settlements and traditions, and it was also suitable for purposes of control: 'This can be seen as the imposition of an ideal social order through rigid planning which makes tangible in built form and space the power and value system of those in authority' (Kellett 2009: 3). The grid is nowadays the most popular layout for Colombian urban areas, and Kellett has argued that the aim of many popular settlers 'is to produce places which are as close as possible to the dominant formal housing areas' in a way to aspire for formal conventionality and respectability (Kellett 2009: 3).

However, this process of imitation and copying may be seen as a way peculiar to popular settlers of developing their perceptions and visions and expressing them in the materiality of their settlements. Architecture itself has developed from processes of imitation, and from learning and exchanging experiences among different social groups at different times. Furthermore the sources that are imitated may exceed city and national boundaries. The pathways of the La Andrea phase 3 park were explained as follows:

> *I do not remember who brought a magazine to the meeting and explained how pathways in English parks work: they follow the traces that people left behind when they crossed the park.*
>
> Interview with Luis Murcia, La Andrea resident, 2008.

The *parque* in the *barrios* starts out as a common expectation or aspiration: every *barrio* needs one. Then the concept of the *parque* takes form, arguably linked with active recreation and the need for a place where children can play. In this regard, the *cancha* (sports field) is seen as the objective: thus, a proper *parque* must have a *cancha*. This explains why the *barrio* park is so often referred to as the *cancha*. However, visions here meet realities as well as alternative visions. Some *barrio* parks will not include a *cancha* because they are set on steep terrain, as in Los Cerezos; or because of their size, as in Villa Sonia; while in other cases, as in La Andrea, many residents do not want one. The latter case demonstrates the existence of alternative visions about how the *parque* should be developed; albeit sharing common ground in the theme of recreation. But recreation is not 'just' about playing – it is also about socialising. Chapter 7 will develop the topic further, but it is sufficient to say at this point that recreation in the *parque* is seen as an important social activity linked to other social activities, such as meeting, shared times and activities, and community gatherings. These activities are closely related to the qualities of the park's users; in other words, to the *barrio* community. This helps us to understand why *parques* can be seen as close to communal spaces, as discussed in chapter 2.

In exploring how these visions take shape, or why they materialise in the way they do, this section has identified two interrelated issues that could offer an explanation: an implicit convention imposed in colonial times that is embedded in people's minds; and an explicit idea of imitating more affluent groups in the city and beyond, through a sort of 'catching up' approach. These ideas, and others related to the consumption of the *parques* which also affect the materiality observed, will be developed further in chapter 7.

5.3.3 Community Organization

Having stated the importance of open spaces to the settlements from their beginnings, and explored settlers' perceptions and visions, the next step is to understand how they are realised. Is there a community organization which works towards the accomplishment of these perceptions and visions? Hernandez Bonilla (2008: 396) finds in Mexico that 'The social organisation of the residents living in the *colonias* [*barrios*] is very important if they seek the permanence and development of their public spaces'. However, the data from this research leads to a different conclusion, at least as regards the initial stages of the development of open spaces (as will be discussed in depth in the next section), closer to Kellett's (2008: 23) finding in popular settlements in Santa Marta (Colombia): 'The *barrio* is far from cohesive with an absence of clear and effective community organisation'. However, community is the leading actor in the production of urban space in the *barrios*, over other actors who normally participate in this production (Carmona, Heath *et a*l. 2003). Of the 57 cases explored for this research, all show a degree of community involvement in the creation and improvement of open spaces. But community, as a group sharing common characteristics, takes different forms in the *barrios*, and is not necessarily structured, stable and permanent. The initiative is often taken by individuals who manage to convince others to work with them in pursuit of a particular objective.

In **Danubio** the process of the park was launched through an individual initiative. In the early stages of the settlement, around what is today the park, several houses were at risk because of land instability. People were offered the possibility of relocation, but one person, Jose Rubio, found the proposal unsuitable and expensive in the long run for his large family: '*after 15 years I will have paid for a house three times smaller and three times more expensive than one I could build myself'*. He convinced his neighbours, and they organised themselves to undertake the task of stabilising the land, which later on became the park. A similar example is presented by **La Andrea**, where people living around a spare piece of land left by the developers as a *'cesion',* organised themselves to convert it into a park. The difference however, is that the president of the JAC at that time was among those living by the unused land. He

channelled the JAC to work on the project, while Jose, quoted above, had had to find support and resources from different sources. In the case of **Aguas Claras,** street improvements were also initiated by interested actors; for example the first transport company which 'informally' (not licensed by the municipality) served the *barrio*. The company managed to bring firm earth to the *barrio* access street, and people from the community helped to compact it. Soon afterwards the recently-founded JAC took responsibility, and continued organising street improvements.

Two more interesting examples of how communities work in the initial stages of their open spaces are Nueva Argentina and Los Cerezos. In **Nueva Argentina,** the community was organised largely by the involvement of an NGO called 'Fundacion Social'. This Jesuit NGO helped people to organise and was a presence in the community for many years; '*La Fundacion'* also facilitates conflict solutions among residents. The process of organisation in **Los Cerezos** was also assisted, but in a different way, the organisational structure being in place before the project started, and the people became in a manner, partners in the project, with rights and obligations. 'Saturnino's aim was to build a utopian community based on autonomous management by residents, so he rejected any kind of intervention by the city administration" (Hataya 2007: 255). Finally, in **Villa Sonia**, in the first few years not much happened to the park or to the community organisation, either. The 'park' looked like a leftover space with a few cemented pathways crossing it and with very little activity. The JAC was gradually able to get some support from the community, and has led some improvement initiatives.

The initial stages of community involvement and organisation were diverse. Some *barrios* were more organised, and some others less so. Nearly every case reveals a different approach to community involvement and organisation in pursuit of respective perceptions and visions of open spaces. It can be argued, however, that sooner or later individuals or groups take the leading role in starting to make things happen.

5.4 The Development Process

5.4.1 The Initial Stages

Following Carmona, Heath *et al.*'s discussion (2003: 224) regarding models of development process in the urban environment, the 'agency model' is the one that fits best in describing the process in the *barrios:* 'derived from behavioural or institutional explanations, these [agency models] focus on the actors and their relationships'. In the six case studies, popular settlers 'received' the space that had been allotted to the *'parque del barrio'* as not much more than an empty space. This was the situation in some clearly-indicated cases (La Andrea, Villa Sonia), but in most of them it was not so clear (Danubio, Cerezos, Aguas Claras and Nueva Argentina). In the first stages, people acting individually or in a group take the first initiatives to develop their *parque*. Arguably the involvement of other actors, especially the municipality, is non-existent in these early stages. People start relating to the space from the inception of the decisions and actions, great and small, that they take over it. This social production of space is closely related to the construction of the place in terms of the relationship that people establish with the environment: 'every society – and hence every mode of production with its sub variants – produces a space, its own space' (Lefebvre 1991: 31). The production and reproduction of meaning in relation to the space, as Lawrence and Low (1990) argue, starts here and will be developed further with the active consumption of the place, which has already begun in parallel.

The agency of the popular settlers in the production and construction of their urban space is clear, and is marked by struggle, especially in the initial stages. The case of Danubio is especially revealing in that sense. When the municipality offered relocation to people who had built their houses around what today is the park because of land instability, the agency of individual, family and community was crucial in finding an alternative way. These were the initial stages of Danubio's *parque*. This is an extract from my notes from a meeting with Lucy and Jose in December 2008:

The municipal office in charge – Emergency and Disasters – asked the families to leave, offering them resettlement somewhere else. People were offered two-family new houses (one above the other) in the same area about 5 kilometres from Danubio. Houses were 5 metres in front and 60 square metres in total, no possibility of extension of the sides or of the upper floor being available. A very low initial payment was demanded, with the rest to be paid in 15 years.

The proposal appealed to many (nothing to pay up front, and the house ready to move into – no need to be built as in Danubio), but not to everybody, among them Lucy and Jose. They thought about their six children and how they would fit into 60 square metres, and with no chance of enlarging the house. But Jose was especially concerned about the mortgage and the variable interest rates, which he did not know anything about at first, but made himself fully-informed on the subject. He learned, for example, that during the first years of the mortgage he would be paying only interest, while the debt on the capital would be growing; to the effect that, after 15 years, he would have paid more than the initial cost of the house, to say nothing of the risk of losing it and what he had already paid in the process. He explained this to his neighbours and convinced them, and the construction of the park started.

Jose went to the Emergency and Disasters office to tell them they were not moving out and that they could do something to recover the place but they needed help. The office Staff were reluctant, but they explained what could be done to stabilise the land and ameliorate the risk to the houses, pointing out that there was a big engineering job to be done there. They needed to channel the stream, replace and cover over the big gaps in the informal sewerage system located there and fill the whole area with several tons of earth. The explanation was enough to discourage anybody and make them think again about the resettlement proposal, but not Jose and the community he was leading.

Jose organised the community, asked for help from public and private offices, got in touch with some politicians to 'work' with them in exchange for help and/or money for the project. After several months and long working hours, the Emergency and Disasters office approved – to their surprise – what the community had achieved. Then the second battle started: what to do with the open space? It was clear that no houses could be built there (although some proposals of the sort were heard), but the idea of a park in that big area looked too much for some. Not without difficulty, the idea of a park was approved, and for the first time (according to Jose) the JAC took responsibility for the development of the project.

Initial actions on the urban space in the *barrios* are 'inspired' by difficulties and are promoted by individuals and later on by groups. In Danubio land instability was the problem; in Aguas Claras the transport for getting into and out of the *barrio*; in La Andrea the risk was to the houses around owing to the traffic of cars and trucks, and

so on. There is no evidence that a structured and well-organised community might be behind these first actions, at least in the cases explored. In Danubio it was Lucy and Jose who took the lead; in Aguas Claras the informal transport company; in La Andrea the president of the JAC at the time. Initial stages of open spaces in the *barrios* are marked by struggle and the agency of individuals who manage to mobilise the community. In this sense, the developmental processes of *barrios* open space tends to confirm what Carmona, Heath *et al*. (2003) argue on the forces and actors involved in the creation and transformation of the urban environment, particularly according to the agency model. These spatial transformation practices can also be seen as place-making activities, linking social and spatial needs in the production of place.

5.4.2 The Improvement Stages

Once the place for the *parque* has been established, either because it has been given, decided or 'created' as in *Danubio*, the improvement process starts. It usually starts with an empty space – nothing more than a green area and eventually a playground contributed by the developers as in the La Andrea phase 1 park. In the improvement stages new themes and new actors become involved. The agency of individuals gradually gives way to the agency of groups, and a hesitant community organization in the initial stages becomes stronger, though not necessarily involving the whole community. The JACs, which have existed since the beginning of the settlements, get a greater role, and with them the role of the municipality, which had also played a relatively small role in the past. Participation and conflict are now more evident in the dynamics of production, in the way that Carmona, Heath *et al*. (2003) suggest when actors come up against each other with their own objectives, motivations, resources and constraints. But the particularities of this production process also produce an 'own space' as Lefebvre (1991) argues, which will be a permanent process through space transformation and consumption practices.

Alongside the leading role of the people of the *barrio* in the transformation of the open spaces, the municipality starts to play an important role in the improvement

stages. This role opens up a number of issues that are discussed in this and the following sections. The dialectic with broader structural forces is one of them, as Carmona, Heath *et al.* (2003) suggest when referring to the institutional model of the production of urban space. The community starts to interact with public institutions and politicians to get what they need. In this sense power relations are developed, as they will be discussed further on. From the 57 cases explored, virtually all of them have had some kind of municipality involvement for improving the open urban areas. This includes *barrios* which have not been legalised yet, such as *Aguas Claras*, but which have been allotted some resources by the municipality to upgrade their parks. As explained in chapter four, two municipality programmes have been especially important in the *barrios* for improving open spaces through joint work with communities: 'Works with an Educational Outcome' (OSP) and 'Works with Citizens Participation' (OPC). However, the participation of the municipality through other smaller programmes and alternative means, such as direct grants for specific works, cover most of the cases studied.

The municipality then, plays a role in the various stages of improvement of open spaces, and the municipality programmes OSP and OPC are of great significance. This participation is, however, within the agency of the people: usually under the leading role of the JAC. JACs were established in 1958 and since then they are the main political and communal organisation within the *barrios*. Their importance in the 1970s and 1980s was great because they could dispose of economic resources given by local politicians in the form of 'subsidies' (*auxilios*) in exchange for votes. In the next section the role of politicians in the development of open spaces will be more deeply examined. Since the new constitution of 1991, JACs are not entitled to receive subsidies, but they are still powerful communal organisations that negotiate with local authorities on behalf the community (Torres 2002).

These two actors, the municipality and the JAC, on behalf of the state and the community respectively, to a large extent define the open spaces of the *barrio*. In this dialectic, power relations are created and transformed. But not only between them, but also within the groups they claim to represent. The development of *La*

Andrea park can illustrate these relationships among the actors and between groups of them:

> *The JAC president of that time, who also lived in the area, decided to lay two big flowerbeds in one of the streets that give access to the park area, obviously to close the entrance. The car-owners became very angry, because the other streets available were very narrow and uncomfortable to enter with their cars. The arguments between the two groups became even more pointed than before, and the JAC president was taken to court for invading the open space. The municipality intervened, and eventually the flowerbeds were torn up. While all of this was taking place, a single event happened that changed the story for good: a small child was hit by a car – nothing serious – but it made everybody think. The decision to have a 'proper' park on this piece of land was finally taken.*
>
> Interview with Luis Murcia, La Andrea resident, December 2008.

The development process of open spaces in popular settlements is led by the people, through individual and collective actions. Struggle is usually a common factor in the first stages, and interaction and power relations with the municipality in the improvement stages. Community organization, especially through JACs, and participation processes through JACs as well but also with political actors, are part of these power relations. This space production is mediated by social and political relationships, and will result in a 'particular' space, to paraphrase Lefebvre (1991). Or in terms of Schneekloth and Shibley (1995), it is about transforming the space into a habitable place through place-making activities. Along with the production goes the construction of space by means of the functional and symbolic relationships with the place, as will be discussed in chapter six. If so much is put into the process, it is to be expected that the product will not only reflect the producers but also convey important meanings to them, as will be discussed in chapter seven. Meanwhile, the exploration of the social production of informal open space continues with the examination of design, construction and maintenance within the development process.

5.4.3 Design, Construction and Maintenance

In the improvement stages, new actors and new themes appear in the development process of open spaces, which directly influence the design, construction and management of them. The municipality and a more organised community are crucial in these phases; however, other actors continue to play their role, such as politicians and NGOs. About the themes, besides those already commented on – collective action, community participation, and community organisation and the role of the JAC – there are others important to these phases: economic resources, participatory design and participation in the construction. These may be seen as pertaining to what has been discussed previously; however, some specific references will be pointed out.

As Hernandez Bonilla (2004: 159) found in the *colonias populares* in Mexico: 'Within the process of managing the development, residents address the different municipal offices involved with the development of the public space in order to be included within the public works programme of the municipality', the same applying to popular settlers in Bogotá. Communities approach municipal offices for several reasons; arguably the most important is for economic resources. OSP and the current OPC programmes are the most significant, but some other forms of resources and support can be found. From the case studies, three have been developed with OSP (Nueva Argentina, Villa Sonia and La Andrea) and three with other types of municipality support different from OPC (Danubio, Los Cerezos and Aguas Claras). Community and municipality working together, therefore, frame the design, construction and to a certain extent maintenance, of open spaces.

Design

OSP and OPC programmes were created with the idea of supporting community initiatives around open space improvements, and in doing so, strengthening community organisation and participation procedures (Hernandez 2008). Improvement projects, therefore, start with the community's registering an initiative with the municipality. In theory, any community-based group with a legal status

(*personeria juridica*) can register, but in practice only the JACs do so (100% of the cases studied here were presented by the JACs). As explained in chapter four, this is the beginning of a long process, and among the different activities developed, the design for the improvement of the open space is undertaken.

Figure 5.8: Villa Sonia park, before and after
At the top, the original design for the park (source: DAACD, 2005); bottom left before the construction started (source: DAACD, 2005); and bottom right in 2007.

The design had to comply with the open spaces building regulations compiled in the handbook: '*Cartilla del Espacio Publico'* (DAPD and SCA 1993) and with equipment specifications[21] such as the multi-units for the playgrounds. The design also had be within the maximum budget allowed for this type of park within the OSP programme: 46 million Colombian pesos (around £11,500) (DAACD 2005). The

[21] Some building materials and urban furniture are specified in '*Cartilla del Espacio* Publico' and some in the providers' list of the municipality. It is especially clear in the case of the multi-units for the playgrounds and the railings that enclose the '*canchas*' (pitches), which can be found all around the city.

final layout can be observed in figure 5.8, with photos before and after the *parque* was finished.

> *The design process was led by an architect working for the municipality and by two of our representatives. They attended the meetings in the municipality with the architect and spoke for the JAC and the community, and spoke to the architect for the community.*
>
> Interview with Idelfonso, Villa Sonia's resident, December, 2008.

The design process for most OSP projects followed the same patterns; however, some differences occurred, especially in the relationship between the community and municipality. In la Andrea, for example, the architect went to the *barrio* and had participatory design sessions in the community meeting room (*salon communal*). Apparently, this interactive process also produced a quality product and people seemed more comfortable with the results.

> *The decisions to be made were not easy, especially on two issues: could the park allow parking access for a few cars? [as phase 1 park] and would it be a passive or an active park? In this respect it was suggested that a pitch should be constructed and that it should be provided with railings to protect the nearby windows from breakage, as is the case with several parks in the city, but this idea was rejected. After having taken those two important decisions [no cars and no pitches – a 'passive park'], next on the agenda was What should be in it? and How? With the assistance of an architect from the municipality, we discussed what we wanted to have in the park. Among other ideas, three issues were raised: the flowerbeds, the amphitheatre and the pathways [figure 5.9]. The former reflected the idea of some people of having flowers that they could look after and also bring some colour and nature to the park. The idea of flowers and benches came out as we worked jointly with the architect. The amphitheatre came out of the idea of having a place where the community could get together and do the 'olla comunitaria' (community picnic or barbecue), with somewhere to do the cooking in the middle and a place to sit around. The pathways were inspired by English parks, from a book that the architect brought to one meeting.*
>
> Interview with Luis Murcia, La Andrea resident, December 2008.

Figure 5.9: La Andrea phase 3 park
At the top, a sketch layout of the park; bottom left, one flowerbed and *Don Luis* taking care of 'his' plants; and bottom right, the amphitheatre.

Construction

The construction works were commissioned from the JAC by means of a contract, signed by the JAC president in his role as its legal representative. During the design process, meetings were held to organise the budget and building briefs, which were to be incorporated into the contract. Table 5.1 shows the project record of La Andrea's phase three park, in which among other things, the cost is stipulated. From this budget, 5% had to be provided by the JAC, as in all OSP and OPC projects. In La Andrea this 5% was partially provided in cash from social and community events organised by the JAC, and partially from labour put into the construction works.

Table 5.1: La Andrea's phase three park project record
Source: DAACD, 2005.

Contrato numero / Contract number	689-00
Barrio	La Andrea
Localidad / Locality	5-Usme
Contratista / Contractor	JAC La Andrea
Representante legal / Legal representative	Luis Arturo Murcia
Teléfonos / Telephones	7683307-7641396
Dirección de la obra / Site (park) address	Cra 1 H este calle 77 sur o calle 84 C sur carera 45
Objeto del contrato / Contract objective	Parque (park)
Área del proyecto / Project size	1670 m2 de zona verde (green area), 615 m2 de zona dura (paved area), juegos (playground) y mobiliario urbano (urban furniture)
Valor del contrato / Value of the contract	$44.828.935 (around £11,000)
Fecha de iniciación / Starting date	12 Octubre 2001
Fecha acta de finalizacion / Finishing date	22 Febrero 2002

The JAC as the contractor usually hires someone with experience in construction as the construction manager; in la Andrea, this was an engineer[22] who had worked for the JAC in the past. Most of the decisions were taken between the JAC and the construction manager, including finding the workers (according to OSP rules they must first be found within the community), buying the materials (initially from the municipality providers' list) and managing the budget. There is an audit from the OSP programme both regarding technical aspects and financial issues. In La Andrea, Villa Sonia and Nueva Argentina, the JAC reported that the budget was not only enough to finish the works, but also to do other things, thanks especially to the savings they made in materials. In La Andrea, they were able to pave two pedestrian streets that give access to the park, which was not contemplated in the original project.

Maintenance

Maintenance is supposed to be a shared responsibility between the municipality and the JAC. Both in OSP and OPC programmes, the contracts signed by the JACs establish that they must take care of the everyday maintenance of the open spaces, while the municipality must be of assistance in more serious issues, such as urban

[22] An engineer in the construction manager's role is not very frequent; it is more common to have a '*Maestro de Obra'* (senior construction worker). In other cases, architects are also engaged to be responsible for the construction works.

furniture replacement or construction problems appearing after finishing the works. In practice, this does not work so well: JACs may forget this responsibility or might not be able to comply for other reasons, and the municipality may take a very long time to respond to a community call. In the opinion of Martha (current JAC president of La Andrea), the maintenance of parks and open spaces in the *barrio* depends largely on the community. She compares the phase one and phase three parks, the latter being in much better condition:

> *The sense of community and belonging of the people of 'El Ocho' park [phase three] is very high, they have always been interested in their park and they still are. When a light bulb is damaged, 'Don Luis' calls me to get it changed, when a brick from the amphitheatre has fallen, 'Don Enrique' looks me up to let me know. Some time ago rubbish bags appeared in parts of the park, and we knew they were not from people of the vicinity, so some members of the community looked into who was doing that, and they eventually got to know who was responsible. They followed them to their houses [in a nearby barrio] and later they took the rubbish bags and put them in front of the doors of their houses. That was the end of that problem.*
>
> Interview with Martha, La Andrea resident, December 2008.

In Nueva Argentina, the basic maintenance of the park is organised differently. The JAC rents out the community meeting room for social and religious events, and this money is used to cut the grass and maintain the playground. For the pitch, the group who organise the football championship of the area is in charge of keeping the field clean and the goals and the railings in good condition. In Villa Sonia, however, the JAC relies only on the maintenance provided by the municipality in terms of rubbish collection and general cleaning up which normally is carried out once a week.

Romero, Mesias *et al*. (2004) argue that the production of the urban environment comprises four main parts: i) planning and management; ii) construction; iii) distribution; and iv) use; and in the social production of habitat (PSH) these four phases were oriented (self-started – self-managed) and sometimes physically undertaken (self-built) by the people – the users. Design, construction and maintenance activities of open spaces in the *barrios* confirm these authors' claims, at least in the first three aspects (the fourth aspect, use, will be discussed in the next chapter). In this sense, the dialectical relationship between people and place is observed from the production of the urban environment, and the leading role of the

user is significant. The next section will explore this involvement in more detail, and will also identify and discuss the role of other actors.

5.5 Actors and Roles

At the beginning of the chapter, eight different types of actor were identified, according to Carmona, Heath *et al*. (2003). Arguably in the production of open spaces in the *barrios*, most of the roles are mainly accomplished by two actors: the community and municipality. However, these actors encompass others within their category; community also involves individuals and groups not necessarily acting as a cohesive and organised community, and municipality involves programmes and offices, as well as the State. However, there are other actors, the most influential being arguably the politicians. The relationship between politicians and *barrios* has a long history in Bogotá (Hataya 2007), as it will be discussed in the next section. Other actors who are not involved in all the cases as previously explained but when present play a significant role are NGOs and social and cultural (including religious) organisations. The 'pirate' or illegal developers (see chapter 4) may play a role, but their involvement usually does not go beyond selling the plots, and only very occasionally providing the areas where the *parque* can be built.

Paraphrasing Carmona, Heath *et al*., the actors involved in the production of open spaces in the *barrios* are: occupiers, community, municipality, politicians, NGOs, social organisations and 'pirate' developers. And in their respective roles, each of the actors brings different objectives and motivations, apart from questions of resources and constraints. This is observed in the relationships in which the actors engage, participation practices and conflicts being arguably the most evident outcomes. These can be seen as power relations, where the different actors 'negotiate' something to obtain something else, this being especially clear in the relationship between community and politicians. In this sense, place is not only physical matter, it intersects with social relations, including authority and power, as Cresswell (1996) argues. The next sections explore actors, their roles and the social and power

relations among them, which demonstrably contribute to produce 'the' open spaces found in the *barrios*.

5.5.1 Community

Community is not a straightforward concept, and this is reflected in practice. Garcia, Guiliani *et al*. (1999: 734) explain community as: 'a) feeling strongly for the people and the place; b) the importance given to the interaction and the quality of life; c) concern for education of and respect for children; and d) collaboration, sharing and living together'. Evidence from the case studies suggests that community is not always as ideal as Garcia, Guiliani *et al.* argue, though it may be the case in some circumstances. Community or communities within the *barrios* are diverse and follow different agendas. In terms of the social production of space, JACs are perhaps the most important community groups within the *barrios*, because of their legal status and their political and social connections. However since the 1980s in Bogotá's *barrios*, cultural, economic and women's associations have begun to be increasingly popular, in many cases as an alternative to the JACs (Torres 2002).

But community initiatives are not the only ones present in the *barrios*. As explained in the first stages of the development process, individual inventiveness is also present especially in the early stages. However, this can be seen as individualism – as 'looking after number one', or perhaps as putting individual and family needs above those of others. This attitude is also found when maintaining open spaces, when it is not difficult to hear '*I just take care of the front of my house, I do not care what happens elsewhere*', or not even the front of the house: *'We have not been able to see to it that the people around the phase one park of the barrio take care of their own frontages: they say that it must be done by the municipality or the JAC'* (Interview with Martha, La Andrea's resident and current JAC president, December 2008). Communities in the *barrios* are far from being solid and cohesive units, participating and acting for the welfare of all, conflict being part of interpopular relationships and open space production, inasmuch as these form part of the political dimension (Carr, Francis *et al*. 1992; Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003).

However, individuals are also the driver of communities and there are plenty of examples in the *barrios*. This is the case, for example, of Jose and Lucy in Danubio who managed to mobilise the community to stabilise the land where the park was to be developed, or Lidya in Aguas Claras who has faced the legalisation process of the *barrio* which is still ongoing, or Carmen in 'Tanque Laguna' (from the 57 general cases) who led a long struggle against private and public bodies on behalf of the park in her *barrio*, which is an example for the locality: '*We fought for our park, but the fight is not over, we need many other things in our barrio'* (Interview with Carmen, December 2008). Lucy, Lidya and Carmen confirm the important role of women in the production of habitat in informal settlements in Latin America, as has been acknowledged elsewhere (Kellett 1995; Avendaño and Carvajalino 2000; Hordijk 2000; Segovia and Oviedo 2000).

Despite the lack of full agreement between the people and their JACs, they are arguably the most visible community organisation in the *barrios*, and regarding the production of open spaces they have a major role, as the case studies confirm. They were and still are the only formal and recognised link between the people and the government. Since their origins the link between JACs and politicians has been crucial. Until 1991, JACs were allocated resources directly from politicians in what was called '*auxilios parlamentarios*' (politicians' subsidies); however, this practice was banned because of corruption and 'clientism' (Borrero 1989). However, the JAC-politician relationship still exists as a form of political patronage, which means the politician acts as the patron or 'link' with the government and the municipality office (Hataya 2007). Arturo, the current JAC president of Danubio, puts it in this way: '*We play the game according to the politician in power'*. JACs are part of the politics of the *barrios*, and despite their critics, they have presented the main participation scenario for negotiating with the government.

5.5.2 Municipality

Carmona, Heath *et al*. (2003) recognise the public sector as a key actor in the production of the built environment. The public sector includes government bodies,

planning authorities and regulatory agencies. In the production of space in the *barrios*, the public sector is the municipality. The Municipality in popular settlements has two roles: first, providing policies and regulatory frameworks, and second, providing infrastructure and communal services. For some authors, such as Viviescas, Gomez *et al.* (1989), the role of the municipality in the *barrios* is less about planning as it should be, and more about 'catching up' with regard to the *barrios* development, legalising them, bringing in public services and 'helping' people to improve their own settlements. In this perspective, municipality is seen as a passive but necessary actor in the dialectic relationship between popular settlers and the public sector in connection with the creation and transformation of settlements and the improvement of their living conditions. Evidence from this research tends to confirm this interpretation.

The Municipality implements national policies on planning, housing and open spaces in the city, as well as developing and implementing its own policies at local level. In relation to informal settlements, municipal policies tend to focus on participation, legalisation and 'de-marginalization' to reduce socio-economic and urban marginality of the urban poor. Since the national constitution of 1991, participation has been established as a tool for involving people in the decisions that affect their lives, including those relating to the built environment. Since then, policies and programmes have been created in order to implement the concept, which to some extent has still not been achieved (Hataya 2007). At local level, the most recent law on participation is the decree 448 of 2007 and the establishment of the municipal system of citizen participation and the '*Espacios Civicos de Participacion Cuidadana'* (Civic Spaces with Citizen Participation), which exhorts co-ordination between civil society and the municipality. See the informative pamphlet in figure 5.10:

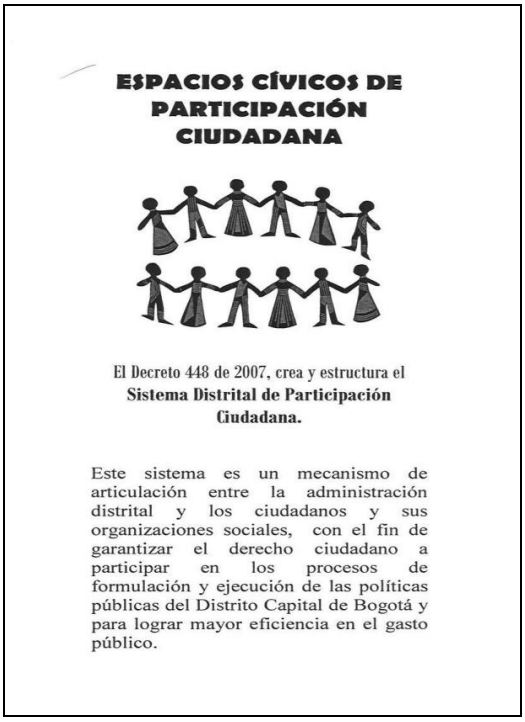

Figure 5.10: Civic Spaces with Citizen's Participation
Pamphlet to exhort people in the *barrios* to be involved in local level participation committees.

In the participatory sense, and despite there being other programmes and other public offices which have to do with open spaces in the *barrios*, as explained in chapter four, the IDPAC office is now the main actor on the municipality side, and the OPC, the main programme. The programme claims to join a building component (*componente de obra*) with a social component (*componente social*); in other words, the materiality of the open space is not the only objective, but also the only aspect of community empowerment in the process (figure 5.11).

Figure 5.11: IDPAC presentation of OPC programme for communities

Just as the JAC is the key actor on behalf of the community in the production of space, the IDPAC is the key actor in the municipality's corner. The latter, however, follows an agenda which is not only social and technical, but political as well, as being part of the party of the Mayor in office. This brings into focus a particular characteristic of the relationship between communities and government (national and municipal) – politicisation – and contributes to explaining why politicians are largely involved with popular settlements, along with the power relations that are created. Although since the constitution of 1991 there have been several efforts to minimize these practices and make municipal offices and programmes less vulnerable to changes to the ruling party (Velasquez 2003), this is still a common trend. In the case of the municipality, every four years the party in power brings in its own people, and decides whether or not this or that office and programme should continue and, if so, what resources should be allocated. This is the case with the IDPAC, which a few years ago, and under a different party in power, was called DAACD, while the OPC programme was called OSP (see chapter 4 for the explanation of the various offices and programmes); however both offices and programmes aim at the same objectives, and no apparent reason exists as to why they should be renamed (Hernandez 2008).

In this regard, the relationship between communities and the municipality is to a large extent mediated by a political dialectic, politicians needing communities' votes to get into power (or remain in power), and communities needing politicians to effect changes to their *barrios,* including the improvement of open spaces. The next section explores this power relationship further, as well as looking at other actors involved.

5.5.3 Other Actors

Although community and municipality are the key actors in the production and transformation of urban space in popular settlements, there are a number of other actors who play a role. Arguably, politicians and NGOs are the other main characters; however, religious associations, professionals – especially architects and engineers – private companies (including builders and construction materials

retailers) and universities (including graduate and undergraduate students) may be found in some cases, involved in either a part or the whole process.

As explained earlier, the role of **politicians** is to link community and municipality in terms either of channelling economic resources for specific things (the school, the street, the park, and so on) or influencing municipal offices to deliver public and other services to the *barrio*. The former role is seen most markedly in action when the *barrio* has been working out the initial stages, after which the latter role described becomes crucial. In the six case studies, politicians have had a role at some point, confirming that they are still a major force behind the development of popular settlements in Bogotá, contributing to the ambivalent relationship between formality and informality. In *Aguas Claras*, which is still in the process of legalisation and of acquiring public services for the *barrio* (they have electricity, telephone and gas, but they lack water and sewerage) the relation with politicians is illustrative:

> *In this very same chair (referring to the chair I was sitting on inside her simple house) two Mayoral candidates for Bogotá (in different elections) were seated: Mr.Caicedo and Mr Lozano.*[23] *They have been very good to our barrio.*
>
> Interview with Maria, Aguas Claras' resident, 2008.

Hataya (2007) analyses the relationship between the *barrios* and politicians in detail, arguing that politicians have been a consistent part of the development of informal settlements in Bogotá; that this relationship is mutually dependent, in a sort of patron – client relationship. Auyero (1999) explains how this power relationship of politicians over communities results from their help in the improvement of the settlements; in other words, the relationship between politicians and communities is based on the exchange of aid for votes. The relationship is conflictive and changing, because new powers, political forces and institutions have appeared in Bogotá and Colombia recently, especially with reference to the JALs[24] as an alternative power centre to the JACs in the *barrios* and the localities.

[23] Both have been members of the Colombian parliament. Lozano was the Minister of Housing, Territorial Development and Water under Uribe's last presidency period. Caicedo was the Mayor of Bogotá for a period; however, when he went to the *barrio* he was candidate for a second period. Neither Lozano nor Caicedo won the elections.

[24] JAL are the initials for '*Junta Administradora Local'* (Local Administrative Committee) and '*Ediles*' are its members. The JALs were created after the constitution of 1991 as a tool for political

NGOs have also played a role in the production of space in the *barrios,* although less prominent as that of the politicians. The participation of NGOs is clear in Los Cerezos and Nueva Argentina, less important in Danubio and La Andrea, and arguably nonexistent in Aguas Claras and Villa Sonia. The best example is Los Cerezos in the *barrio* Manuela Beltran, where an NGO called 'Integral Community Company' oriented by the Catholic priest, Saturnino Sepulveda, organised the settlement by mobilising the community. *'It was not only a housing project, but also a social and political proposal'* (Interview with Tito Lopez, founder and current resident of Manuela Beltran, December 2008). Not only the houses but the public services and the open spaces were initially organised by the community company. In Nueva Argentina, the NGO '*Fundacion Social'* worked alongside the community to build the Catholic church and to organise the basic areas of the park. NGOs, as well as other actors, have their own objectives and motivations, and often clash, especially with JACs in competing for municipal resources, for political interest and for people's support. This was the case of the *barrio* Manuela Beltran, where despite the initial immense popularity of the 'Community Company' and of Saturnino's ideas, he was gradually losing credibility and support in favour of the JAC. Indeed, the latter ultimately displaced the NGO is terms of community organisation and leadership. The story of the '*Fundacion Social*' is similar; however, the conflict in this case was with other NGOs working in the *barrio,* owing to an underlying competition between them. Despite difficulties, NGOs play a significant role.

Other actors include religious associations, which are present in all the settlements nowadays from Catholic and Evangelical backgrounds.[25] In Danubio for example, both churches campaign for maintaining open spaces, and they have even worked together in some initiatives. The participation of other actors is less frequent, being almost on an occasional basis. The involvement of architects and engineers, for

decentralisation and a more grounded participation. The JALs work at the locality level (Bogotá is divided into 20 localities) and the *ediles* are elected by popular democratic vote. The JACs have thereby lost part of their role in linking community and politicians, as the community can bypass them and go directly to their *ediles* and vice-versa.

[25] This was not the case 10-15 years ago, when the Catholic Church was predominant and the sole presence in the *barrios*. It might still predominate, but in recent years, increasingly, other churches have appeared on the scene.

example, depends on either a specific interest in and personal commitment to the *barrio* on the part of the professional or contacts with communities which can be converted into paid activities. In general, the participation of architects in these areas is very limited.

5.6 Defending and Upgrading

5.6.1 Conflicts and Defence of Open Spaces

'Conflict is an intrinsic characteristic of low income neighbourhoods as a result of disputes over land. Inhabitants struggle to take control of the spaces, and protect them against internal – external agents who want to privatise a collective property' (Hernandez Bonilla 2008: 404). This argument for the *colonias populares'* open spaces in Mexico, is also relevant to popular settlements in Bogotá. Conflict and defence have been present since the early beginnings of the open spaces, through the improvement stages and in everyday use and appropriation. Conflicts are between actors and within groups of actors who follow different agendas and look for different objectives, and the production of space materialises these struggles and negotiations (Bentley 1999; Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003). Since public spaces are also at the centre of the public realm, they are the subjects of power relationships and struggles for control (Rosenthal 2000). Open spaces reflect communities, and the communities project onto them their traditions, self-regulations and meanings (Saldarriaga 1996). In this rich but complex scenario, conflict is an actual tool for producing and constructing those places.

The initial stages of open spaces are marked by struggle. The case of Danubio offers a good example of how the community literally makes the land available for building the park later on, against the municipality's plans: *'I convinced my neighbours that the best option we had was to stabilise the land and save our houses. We organised ourselves to work on weekends, it took us several months, but we finally did it'* (Interview with Jose, Danubio resident, December 2008). Nueva Argentina's community had to fight first against other squatters who wanted to occupy the land

where the *parque* was going to be built in future, and second, against the police who on several occasions came to tear down the enclosures around the land: '*We had to defend the land several times against people who came to occupy it'* (Interview with Marco Fidel, Nueva Argentina resident, December 2008).

Improvement stages also saw conflicts and the need to defend open spaces. These were among and within groups of actors involved in the upgrading process. Within the community one school of opinion may want one thing, while another school of opinion may aim for something else. In La Andrea, the conflict originated in the question of car-use. Car-owners wanted to be allowed to park their vehicles within the space, while others wanted an exclusively pedestrian area with flowers and trees. *'The JAC started mediating in the discussion, and they organised meetings to talk openly about the subject. I attended some, but they were pointless – we could not reach an agreement and sometimes they even ended in fights between the two groups'* (Interview with Martha, La Andrea resident, December 2008). They may have not reached a unanimous agreement, but in the end they managed to build a park which apparently suited the majority of the people (the exclusively pedestrian option). In Villa Sonia something similar occurred, but the cause was football. Part of the community wanted to stop the playing of football in the park because of the risk to the windows of nearby houses. According to Idelfonso, JAC president since 2008, about two years ago the JAC supported the decision to build a round flowerbed in the middle of the 'informal' pitch to prevent children playing football. *'It was a fierce discussion'* and the flowerbed had to be removed (see figure 5.12). Some months later, the JAC got some resources to erect railings on two sides of the pitch. They partially solved the problem, but it is still an issue because the railings are not high enough and balls can easily go over them (see figure 5.12): *'Children are constantly playing football and breaking the windows, and nobody does anything about it'* (Interview with Rosa, Villa Sonia resident, in front of the park, December 2008).

Figure 5.12: Some physical actions in Villa Sonia park
Left, the trace of the flowerbed in the middle of the football pitch; right, the railings that partially enclose the *cancha.*

Conflicts among actors and improvement stages. Debatably, these conflicts are largely between the two main actors of open space development, the community and the municipality. Struggle for *barrio* legalisation and public services provision are the most significant causes of conflict in the early stages, and resources for community facilities, streets and parks in the improvement phases. As referred to previously, these conflicts are 'managed' through existing power relations, on the understanding that both parts need each other.

Conflicts over open spaces in the *barrios* are also related to the uses and appropriation that some individuals and groups either attempt, or actually effect. These conflicts may be divided into two types: first, uses that interfere with the harmony of the community in general, such as drinking in streets and parks; and second, the intended appropriation of some spaces by gangs in a sort of pitch-control. These will be discussed in chapter six.

5.6.2 Progressive Upgrading

Open spaces have played a role since the early beginnings of popular settlements, when they were just an idea or a wish in the settlers' minds, and, through a contested and gradual process of self-help, people managed to materialise those ideas. It is a permanent improvement process, or a progressive upgrading, as it is usually called

when referring to popular housing; and as with housing, there is always room for improvement. This can also be connected to place-making activities, whereby the agency of the people is stressed in place transformation, taking place through a kind of permanent transformation process. In this view, paraphrasing Cresswell (2004), open spaces can be seen as never-to-be-finished places, that result from social processes and practices.

Kellett (2009: 4) referring to popular housing argues that 'the long-term nature of the process demonstrates that dwellers are not present time focused, in contrast to the common myth'. In the same sense, open spaces represent both a wish and a plan for the future; popular settlers envisage their *parque* from the early beginnings, and there is always room for improvement. As with popular housing, so with open spaces, Avendaño and Carvajalino (2000) describing progressive upgrading as a production process. They argue that it is a process which accompanies the everyday life of popular settlers. A clear plan exists, but not a fixed timetable, and decisions are taken on a short-term basis, depending on the money available (savings, loans, municipal subsidies) and other circumstances. The house improves piecemeal, in a progressive development, involving the social and economic efforts of the family, and this development never stops. The process of open spaces in the *barrios* can be similarly described: with clear plans and wishes the process of the *parque* becomes part of the everyday life of the community. Decisions are taken according to circumstances and money available, as processes of piecemeal improvement, community efforts, and a continuous development with no apparent finale.

The six case studies confirm what has been said. All the open spaces started from very small beginnings, and have gradually become relatively well-consolidated, and still there are plans for more. However, the level of consolidation varies in proportion as to the extent that each case has achieved its aims. In five of the six case studies, open space improvement started once other main needs had been to a large extent solved, especially in terms of public services; as Hernandez Bonilla (2007) found in the '*Colonias Populares'* in Mexico. However, an exception is found in the sixth case, Aguas Claras, which has not acquired drinking water and drainage works from the municipality (but it has got electricity, gas and telephone). Here the park

has been upgraded thanks to municipal funds and proactive works. This may be contradictory, but an explanation can be found in the different agendas and budgets held by respective municipal offices, as was the case with Mexico's *'colonias'*. (Hernandez Bonilla 2004). This can also be seen as a part of the difficulties and misunderstandings this *barrio* has had vis-à-vis legalisation because of its location on the Eastern Mountains of Bogotá (see chapter four). *'We need to solve the legalisation problem first in order to get proper water and sewerage, and then we'll take care of the rest'* (Interview with Lidya, current JAC president of Aguas Claras, December 2008).

In all six of the case studies, there are plans for continuing the open spaces' upgrading process, and in some of them there are specific initiatives underway at the moment, while in others, such as Aguas Claras, plans are a bit further away. Recently in La Andrea (December 2008), the JAC got resources from the municipality to paint the house façades in front of the third phase park, under the programme '*Pinta tu Barrio'* (Paint your *Barrio*). The municipality provides the paint and the community the labour (see figure 5.15). *'The idea is to paint two houses with the same colours, combining one strong and one pale; we have to talk to our neighbours and decide on the colours.'* (Interview with Martha, La Andrea resident, December 2008). This painting project not only confirms the community's ongoing interest in improving their park, but also relates to the aesthetic sensibilities of the dwellers, linking the social production of the space with its visual appearance and design language, as well as its expressiveness, chapter 7 will explore further.

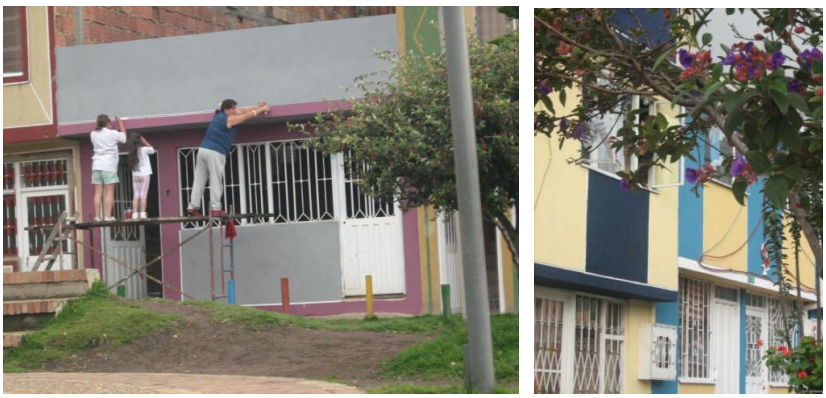

Figure 5.13: La Andrea phase 3 park painting initiatives
Left, family painting their facade; right, pale and strong colours.

Los Cerezos, Danubio, Villa Sonia and Nueva Argentina are currently working on projects for presentation to the municipality OPC programme in order facilitate the upgrading of their parks. Nueva Argentina's JAC president thinks this is also a good opportunity for gathering the community together in a good cause: *'We have not worked together as a community for a long time, and it is important to do it again' (Interview with Marco Fidel, Nueva Argentina resident, December 2008).* Villa Sonia's JAC president has specific objectives:

> *The idea for the park is to get a proper mini football pitch and organise championships among residents and with other nearby barrio teams as well. There isn't much needed, just the goal posts and the marks over the tarmac. Regarding nearby houses' windows I don't think there is a big risk, however I don't yet know that everybody agrees.*
>
> Interview with Idelfonso, Villa Sonia's resident, December 2008.

Open space improvement continues progressively, in step with housing, in order to accommodate people's needs and expectations. But it can also work towards other types of objective, like reinforcing community links, as with Nueva Argentina for example. Conflict and negotiation continue to be part of the process, within the community and with external agents, such as the municipality. The production of space in the *barrios* is once more confirmed as being connected with the social construction.

5.7 Conclusions

This chapter has aimed at exploring the first question of this research: how open spaces in popular settlements are designed, built, managed, transformed and sustained, and the role of locals and other actors in it. The chapter discussion confirms that, as in the case of housing, open spaces are largely developed by the inhabitants, and are based on their needs and expectations but also depend upon their opportunities in terms of resources and support originating from external agents. Open spaces have held an importance for settlers since their settlement's earliest beginnings; however, their actual improvement comes at a later stage, usually when

the question of public services has been resolved and the houses have first been occupied. The development of open spaces is not oriented by a fixed plan, but is constructed more on a day-by-day basis, motivated by perceptions and visions and also by practical concerns. From the time the land is 'secured' and begins to be defended, the process is marked by contestation and conflict, including conflicts between actors in the process of coordinating their different agendas. Conflicts within the community are also present, and there is a political dimension to the process with regard to decisions, resources and power. Just as with housing, open spaces are subject to permanent upgrading: it is always possible to do something more.

Community initiative, involving both individuals and organised groups, is the main drive for the production and construction of space in popular settlements. In this context, this tends to confirm the idea of place-making as a way of understanding how popular settlers transform their *barrio* spaces into homes. This can also be related to the everyday social production and construction of space, in opposition to the ideas and theories propounded by urban planners and managers (De Certeau 1984), and as an alternative way of seeing places from the perspective of daily life, 'with its spontaneity, difference and disorder' (Madanipour 1996: 73).

It can be argued that the production of open space in the *barrios* is closely linked with its construction, and with the product itself. The *barrio* park or the '*cancha*' offers a good example, as the production of this space is related to the way it is used: for recreation, but also as a place to build social relationships. The '*cancha'* is not only about playing football (or any other sport), it is also about the territorial appropriation that some individuals and groups attempt or achieve, and, potentially, the conflicts generated thereby. Production and consumption are closely related. This chapter has focused on the former, chapter 6 will focus on the latter, but the connections can be read either way: the product is related to production and consumption and the initial conceptions of open spaces, just as the permanent and progressive upgrading of them harks back to those causes. Chapter 7 will explore the form, the design language and the meaning of open spaces in popular settlements, in close relationship with their production and consumption.

6.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, open spaces in popular settlements are designed, built, transformed, managed and sustained mainly due to the initiative and involvement of the people. It can be argued, therefore, that urban space in the *barrio* is socially produced. But the social production and consumption of space are intrinsically related (Low 1996) and may be seen as aspects of the same process; and in a similar manner, production and consumption can be linked with the product (Harvey 1996). For explanatory purposes, chapter 5 examined the social production of space and chapter 7 will investigate the place produced in terms of form, design language and meaning. This chapter explores the social construction of space, which corresponds to the second research question of this thesis: what is the relationship between open spaces and the people (users) who create them? The relationship is defined by people-place connections; in which places are transformed by people's interactions, and people can be transformed in their routines and social relationships by interacting with places.

'The social construction of space is the actual transformation of space – through people's social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting – into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning' (Low 1996: 861-862). In this respect, people's interactions with open spaces have two aspects: the functional and the symbolic; the first understood as the physical and everyday usage of the space, the second understood as the experiential and representational interaction. Just as these exchanges with the place may transform it; so types of usage may transform social relationships and generate different levels of attachment to and appropriation of the place. In order to explore these issues, the chapter will use the literature review presented in chapter 2 as the framework for the analysis; however, more and detailed theoretical input will be addressed when needed.

Like the other chapters, this one is divided into five main parts. The first part summarises major theoretical points regarding the social construction of space and

open spaces used for the analysis. The second section examines the everyday construction of place, in terms of the social and cultural practices developed in open spaces. The third part discusses functional construction, featuring the main activities taking place in the *barrio* streets and parks: recreation and commerce. The fourth section discusses 'power constructions' in terms of the conflicts derived from the actual and potential use and appropriation of open spaces. The fifth part explores experiential and symbolic constructions, discussing how popular settlers relate to spaces in terms of experience and cognition; in other words, what open spaces may mean and represent to people. The chapter finishes with a concluding segment that recapitulates the main ideas discussed and presents preliminary conclusions which will be elaborated further in the final chapter.

6.2 The Social Construction of Open Space

6.2.1 Social Construction of Space and Place-Making

Chapter 5 argued that popular settlers acting individually or through organised groups are the main actors in the production of open space in the *barrios*. This chapter will discuss how, as with its production, the social construction of open space is undertaken by the people who live in the *barrio* and in the close vicinity of the space. Although they are public in terms of accessibility and ownership, *barrio* open spaces 'belong' to the people. The social construction of space is about people interacting with a space, or as Low (2000: 127) puts it, spatializing culture: 'By spatialize I mean: to locate – physically, historically, and conceptually – social relations and social practice in space'. For Relph (1976: 1), this is about constructing place, which is a condition of human existence: 'to be human is to have and know your place'. Elaborating on the idea of place as a socio–spatial construct, Holloway and Hubbard (2001: 7) argue that 'as people construct places, places construct people (inferring a reciprocity between people and place)'. This can also be seen as the practice of everyday life constructing places: 'Place is synonymous with what is lived in the sense that daily life practices are embedded in particular places. Social

practice is place-bound [...] Life is place dependent' (Merrifield 1993: 525). In this regard, the idea of place-making can contribute to understanding and analysing the production and construction of space in the *barrios*, superseding the arguments around marginality and poverty through which it is usually approached. As Lombard (2009) argues, place-making can be understood as the lived experience of the users and producers of a place; as the site of complex and entangled power relations and conflicts; and as an ongoing process that is never finished. These three characteristics largely describe the production and construction of space in popular settlements.

The social production and construction of space and place-making can be seen as appropriate conceptual tools for understanding and analysing open spaces in popular settlements. Both identify the agency of the people in transforming their space and making it their own, and in the process of space transformation social relations and practices also change. The previous chapter explored the transformation of open spaces and social relationships by means of the production process; this chapter explores the transformation of the same subjects by means of the construction process, or the interaction between people and place. The first of these interactions is everyday use (De Certeau 1984); the space of everyday life or representational space (Lefebvre 1991); the 'daily acts of renovating, maintaining and representing the places that sustain us' (Schneekloth and Shibley 1995: 1).

In popular settlements, these activities are related to the social and cultural practices developed in open spaces. These are comprised mainly of sociability, community events, traditional manifestations, expressions of religious and political demonstrations. The second group of overlapping interactions are the functional ones – movement (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003), rest and relaxation (Carr, Francis *et al.* 1992) and meeting people – which overlap with everyday practices (Gehl 1999). In the open spaces of popular settlements, these are arguably represented in the recreational activities developed in parks, and the commercially-related activities developed on the streets. A third group of interactions can be seen as those related to power and conflict (Low 2000; Rosenthal 2000), and explained by Madanipour (1999: 880) in these terms: 'Control of public space is therefore essential in the

power balance in a particular society'. Power relationships can be seen in the territorial control and appropriation that different groups try to effect over the open space, and in the conflictive usage of these spaces. This last group of interactions (related to power and conflict) is consequent upon the former ones (functional uses) and the symbolic uses that people may give to open spaces. Functional uses can be related also to the experiential construction of place in terms of place identity (Relph 1976); belonging (Proshansky, Fabian *et al*. 1983); and appropriation and territoriality (Jimenez Dominguez 2007; Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira 2008). While symbolic uses can be exemplified by cognitive constructs (Madanipour 1996) and imaginary representations (Silva 1992; Soja 2000).

6.2.2 Open Spaces in Popular Settlements: the Street and the '*Cancha*'

The people-place interactions sketched above will be explored in detail in the following sections with regard to the open spaces of popular settlements in Bogotá, as examined through the case studies used for this research. However prior to this, it is helpful to undertake a swift review in order to refine the understanding of those spaces, and their specific characteristics in terms of production, use and form. They are, for example, more intensively used and display more signficant dynamics than those in higher income residential environments, as found by Riaño (1990) in the *barrios* of Ecuador and Colombia. Furthermore, these spaces are largely characterised by recreation: 'passive recreation of the sort that characterizes landscapes in the formal city is not a priority in informal contexts' (Beardsley and Werthmann 2008: 33). But one of the most important characteristic of open spaces in popular settlements is their close relationship with the people who live around them, confirming that these spaces, although they are public in terms of accessibility and ownership, may be less so in terms of use and appropriation. Riaño (1990) explains how the difference between the housing spaces and the open spaces in popular settlements is not as strong as in higher income residential areas.

In the *barrios* the difference between these spaces is understood more in terms of inside and outside than of private and public. For Segovia and Oviedo (2000: 53):

> *The public space [open space][26] of the barrio is compounded by the outdoor space around the houses, which people who live around can access daily on foot. It is a familiar space, with communal significance, with a symbolic value for a reduced group of people; a place where the special features and the specific norms and values of specific social groups are recognised. Because of their size and scale, barrio public spaces are places to meet others face to face and to develop actions oriented by affect, engagement and recreation.*

The main open spaces in the *barrio* are the street, the *parque* and their variants. Streets can become stairways, adapting to the steep topography found in many of the *barrios*; and the *parque* also has the '*cancha*' (sports pitch), as well as its other recreational areas and sometimes paved and green spaces. The large paved areas found in other parts of the city, dating from colonial times, known as '*plazas*', are non-existent in the *barrios.* The *plaza* 'has been an object of aesthetic inspiration and controversy since its inception [...] [It] also provides a physical, social and metaphorical space for public debate about governance, cultural identity, and citizenship' (Low 2000:32-33). It can be argued that the *plaza* has been transformed into the '*parque del barrio',* carrying similar associations and meanings for the popular settlers, as will be discussed later.

For Niño and Chaparro (1997) the street is the basic open space unit of the *barrios*. Streets are used for connecting and commercial activities, and in addition most social and cultural expressions are channelled through them: 'Streets are the flow of the urban life in the *barrios;* in them love moves, like hate, happiness, sadness and all the main forces that move *barrio* people's lives' (Niño and Chaparro 1997: 6). Streets work in a close relationship with domestic and commercial covered spaces. For Rojas and Guerrero (1997) the street is the extension of the house, and the border between open/closed spaces or outside/inside is a blurred frontier. The '*parque del barrio'* or '*cancha*' is also a recognisable open space. In functional terms they are

[26] These authors, in common with others in area of study, refer to public space as a general category. However, once elaborated, it becomes clear that the publicness of those spaces is not necessarily what is meant – as is argued in this thesis.

oriented towards sports and recreation; however, their use and significance go well beyond that. As with the streets they have social and cultural usages and significance, and most of them are physical and identity landmarks in the *barrios* (Niño and Chaparro 1997). Another important feature of the open/public places in the *barrio* is the existence of other spaces that do not meet the criteria for open urban spaces, but because of their uses and importance, are very close to them. Carmona (2010) calls them third spaces or 'new forms' of semi-public space, referring to small businesses such as coffee shops and bookstores, and in the *barrios* they are represented by the '*salones comunales*' (community meeting rooms), but also by the '*tienda*' (local store) and more recently the '*tienda de minutos e internet*' (internet-and-telephone store). This research will not go into detail about them, but their importance and relationship with open spaces is acknowledged and discussed.

6.3 Social and Cultural Practices: Everyday Construction

6.3.1 Building Social Relationships

In chapters 1 and 2, an ambivalent and binary view of informal settlements was introduced, having first established the complexity of the subject. It was stated that the dichotomy between formal and informal, and its associated characteristics – legal/illegal, central/marginal, superior/inferior – were to be avoided, in order to study those settlements as 'ordinary' settlements, to bring out their intrinsic qualities, rather compare them with other settlements, as Robinson (2006) suggests. However, when necessary, the 'extraordinary' characteristics and challenges of popular settlements are to be indicated and discussed, as for example Brillembourg Tamayo, Feireiss *et al.* (2005) argue. On this basis, chapter 5 discussed the production of informal open space, suggesting some special characteristics, among them the people's deep involvement in the creation of their own built environment. Chapter 6 will likewise discuss the particular ways that open space in popular settlements is consumed and people's relationship with their space. The complexity of the subject is thereby confirmed, open spaces being approached as 'ordinary' places, but at the

same time acknowledging some unique features. This raises the question of the distinctiveness of popular settlements: whether they are really unique or just varied, like other settlements in the city. In other words, what is distinctive about open spaces in popular settlements? And if they are distinctive, is it significant? Is it significant for the people? These questions are implicitly discussed throughout this thesis, where it is argued that differentiating those distinctive aspects helps us to understand them and gives them value. However, there is a risk that open spaces in the *barrio* will be read as something completely different from other urban spaces of the city, or that there will be some suggestion that they are the only valid or most convenient models of their kind, which is not the case. Once more, complexity is confirmed; and in this regard the thesis tries to navigate between the 'ordinariness' and the 'extra-ordinariness' of these spaces when examining their relationship to the people who produce and consume them. With these considerations in mind, this section explores the everyday construction of open spaces in terms of social and cultural practices.

Miles (2000) argues that the actions and uses taking place in the urban space, like the production processes at play in it, become 'statements of identity'. This chapter explores the social construction of open space in the *barrios* in terms of people interacting with them, as Low (1996) suggests. In this sense, the consumption of open space can also be seen through place-making practices, in which popular settlers interact with the space and thereby transform it to meet their own needs, as Schneekloth and Shibley (1995) argue. Through this continuous interaction and transformation, identity is constructed. This section approaches 'the first level' of interactions: those related to functional and everyday use. The everyday construction of open spaces in popular settlements is about walking, stopping and meeting others. Through these basic activities, others are elaborated: building social relationships, expressing individual and community traditions and beliefs, and developing political ideas and concerns. These, however, are interrelated with more functional usages of open spaces such as economic and recreational activities; and all of them contribute to building experiential and symbolic meanings. As Rapoport (1977: 323) argues about public [open] spaces: '[They are] much about individuals and groups. They become symbols of social, ethnic and other identities and play a role in the survival of such groups'. This section explores the social relationships developed within open

spaces, arising from the 'compulsory usages' of open spaces such as walking through them (Gehl 1987) as well as 'everyday practices' (De Certeau 1984), as the common and daily use of streets and parks.

The 57 cases show that the initial and main use of open spaces in the *barrios* is in relation to the house. The door is the first point of contact between the closed and interior world of the home and the open and exterior world of the space outside. Riaño (1990) found that is not uncommon to find the door open in popular settlements: to see people passing, to wait for someone to chat with, to keep an eye on the children who are playing in the street. This was not always observed in the cases explored, because of security concerns; it is, however, much more prevalent than in higher income settlements, confirming Riaño's arguments. The door is the first contact point with the exterior, but not the only one, windows, balconies and terraces playing their roles. The general cases show that the use of streets and parks in the *barrios* tends to be gender, age and time specific. Women are the main weekday users, as Rojas and Guerrero (1997: 26) explain: 'Women use the street to go to the '*tienda*' (local store), to go to work, to take the children to the school or to the park; but also to chat with their friends, to hear the *barrio*'s 'breaking news', to show themselves, to flirt [...]'. By contrast, children are the main actors in the afternoons and early evenings, and in the evenings and weekends, men and young adults take over. Usages include shopping, meeting and chatting with neighbours; playing and talking with friends; and playing football or basketball, talking and drinking. These show the tendencies of everyday practices in relation to open spaces; however, it can be argued that each case is different, confirming the diversity of popular settlements.

Streets are not only for walking and to get from one place to another, as Gehl (1999: 258) points out: 'walking is certainly not merely a mode of transport, it also serves as a social process where you constantly meet, see and hear other people, and it is an activity from which you – at the spur of the moment – can shift to other types of activities'. In **Danubio** for example, the main street is arguably where 'everything happens'. It is a place for transport, shopping, meeting and entertainment. It is likely that at some point in the day, most people will enter the main street for some reason:

to catch the bus, to buy something, to meet a friend, to have a beer or two with their pals. Men, young adults and sometimes women, too, may be seen enjoying a few beers. They buy the beer inside the '*tienda*', and weather permitting, take a chair (or a box, for example) from the shop to the pavement to drink and chat with friends outside. The consumption of beer and open spaces are closely related, and it can be argued that this is a typical manifestation, especially (but not only), of the *barrios* of Bogotá.

Transport is another important everyday use of the streets, especially due to the activity that it generates around bus stops. In the six case studies, similar activities and social dynamics are observed in this regard; however, **Aguas Claras** is more illustrative, because the bus stop is the last on the line. A good number of people wait for the next available bus; and similarly sizeable groups get off here. Around this spot several activities are observed: having coffee and a piece of bread (*'un tintico con pan'*), smoking a cigarette, making a phone call from the *'tienda de minutos'* (phone-store), buying something from a street vendor, chatting with friends, and so on. Bus drivers become part of the cast of *barrio* actors due to the relatively long time they spend in the locale, so that they are recognisable to people and incorporated into their social groups.

The '*parque del barrio'* exhibits very much the same everyday social activities observed in the streets, with some differences. Transport-related activities are not observed here, unless a bus stop is close to the park (as in Nueva Argentina); meeting and chatting activities are more frequent, while children and young adults are the main users of these places. In **Los Cerezos** park for example, the main activities observed are playing, meeting and chatting; while the main actors tend to be women and children. Mothers take their babies to the park to take the sun, the air or just for a short walk. Small children play in the park, usually under the direct supervision of their mothers. With an eye on their babies and small children, women chat to one other on the few benches of the park, or just sit on the grass. However, evenings and weekends look different, older children and younger adults tending to become the park's main occupants. Another meeting and chatting activity observed in the park centres around young couples (*'novios'*) who find the park a fitting place

to spend time together. Usually these couples are former members of the play groups from earlier years, as Rojas and Guerrero (1997) found in their research. The park is a good place for *rendezvous*-ing: 'Let's meet in the park and then we'll decide what to do' is a regular suggestion. It helps that the bus stop is not far from the park, so that people meet there on the way to catching the bus. The borders of the park are also important: they can be meeting points, and contribute to creating the atmosphere of the place, both socially and physically. For example the '*tiendas*' or certain 'special' buildings – in **Los Cerezos** '*Don Jose's miscelenea'* (general store) and 'Don Luis Emilio's house' are significant (figure 6.1). According to Tito (Los Cerezos resident), the '*miscelanea*' is famous for the home-made ice creams and Luis Emilio's house for its bright blue facade. In this sense Rojas and Guerrero (1997) point out that addresses are not important (and very confusing) in popular settlements; instead, people use landmarks (such as the *miscelanea* or Luis Emilio's house) to give directions; in doing so, they are also constructing meanings and giving identity to their *barrios.*[27]

Figure 6.1: Los Cerezos park and surroundings
Left, Luis Emilio's house; right, the corner '*miscelanea*'.

Everyday social activities in open spaces contribute to shaping those places in terms of how they are used and also how they are transformed by means of that use. Social relationships are built in streets and parks, 'new' uses are given to corners and park borders for example, and actual transformation of the space is observed when, for

[27] This is also how the outsider comes to be instantly identifiable: he does not know the codes. In my case when I went to interview Tito I was given directions to look for Luis Emilio's house with its blue facade and I would find Tito's house nearby. After asking around in several *tiendas*, I finally found the house.

example, a chair is taken into the street by a beer drinker, or when a garden is built in front of a house. But these consumption activities also help to build a network of connections in the place, as Carr, Francis *et al.* (1992: 193) suggest: 'Assuming a certain degree of relevance or congruence between users and settings, symbolic connections can result from use'

6.3.2 Cultural Expressions

As discussed by Low (1996), place is shaped by the ideological, political, technological and cultural expressions of those who interact with that place. In the same respect, everyday social and cultural practices transform open spaces and contribute to place-making (Schneekloth and Shibley 1995). This section explores cultural practices around open spaces in popular settlements and the way they contribute to social construction and the shape given to those places. Culture is understood as the views, beliefs, values and traditions of social groups (Rapoport 1976), which help 'to shape their environment to correspond and support their lifestyle' (Kellett 1995: 52). There are several cultural expressions found in the case studies, and for purposes of examination they can be grouped in five themes, although as mentioned earlier some of them can also be seen as social expressions or functionally related activities. These are: celebrations, eating and drinking, traditional games, religious beliefs and community and political activities.

Celebrations

Evidence from the six cases studies show that streets and parks are seen as good places to have gatherings and celebrations in the *barrios*. They range from informal meetings with friends to more elaborate celebrations with a large group of people – even the whole community. Small gatherings with friends where there is chatting, drinking, music, and sometimes dance are very common, especially at the weekend. In La Andrea for example, a group of men bring chairs into the park from their homes, leave their doors open so that they can hear the music from their indoor sound systems and pass in and out getting supplies from the kitchen. They spend the

afternoon in this way (figure 6.2), with women also joining the gathering from time to time, while children are round about, playing in the park.

Figure 6.2: A group of men having a get-together in La Andrea park

More major celebrations are usually held during Christmas and Easter, connecting social practices with religious traditions. As Rojas and Guerrero (1997) found in their research, communities organise themselves to collect money for painting houses, providing pavements and streets with Christmas decorations and organising parties. In Aguas Claras for example, they close one street (placing barriers at each side to control the entrance), decorate it (figure 6.3) and hold the *'novenas'* (nativity prayers) over the nine days before Christmas. The *'novena'* is just one activity: arguably, the major activities are eating, drinking and dancing. However, as discussed below, these celebrations are not entirely free from conflict, and this is why these street parties are more likely to be held in houses and community halls (Rojas and Guerrero 1997).

Figure 6.3: Christmas decorations in Aguas Claras and La Andrea
Left, Aguas Claras Christmas street decorations; right, Andrea park Christmas decorations on the façades.

Eating and drinking

Connected with celebration and a major cultural manifestation in open spaces in the *barrios* are the activities around eating and drinking. La Andrea shows an explicit example of how these activities give shape to open spaces. In the participatory design process of 'el ocho' park (chapter 5), one place was particularly important (figure 6.4): *'It was very important for us to have a rounded space [amphitheatre] within the park to have our 'olla comunitaria' [community picnic]'* (Interview with Martha, La Andrea resident, December 2008). The *'olla comunitaria'* is a monthly (or as required) community event, when those living near the park get together to cook, eat and drink. They listen to music, and eventually, according to Martha, they dance. The food, most of the time, is 'sancocho'[28] (this is a soup, hence the name *'olla'*, which means pot). This *barrio* is especially known for its food, the '*tamales*' and the '*lechona*' being famous in the area,[29] and it is not uncommon on the weekends to observe people sharing these dishes in the street or in the park, as with beer - however, children are included in this activity.

[28] A traditional Colombian dish cooked almost everywhere in the country but with some regional differences, it is a soup with 'everything' - potatoes, plantain, yucca, meat, chicken and vegetables - as the main ingredients.
[29] '*Tamales*': maize pudding filled with chicken and/or meat; and '*lechona*': a suckling pig stuffed with rice and vegetables. These are two traditional dishes from the southern centre of Colombia (Huila and Tolima regions), which also give clues of the origins of some of the *barrio* residents.

Figure 6.4: La Andrea's amphitheatre for the '*olla comunitaria*'

Beer drinking, as remarked previously, is another important way of using the streets and parks. The beer is bought inside a '*tienda*' and taken out to the pavement or the sports field. Some '*tiendas*' have organised a terrace or a covered area at their entrance (figure 6.5) to facilitate this, in a further confirmation of how open spaces are transformed. Among other current manifestations of eating and drinking around the open spaces, there is one that deserves particular attention: the consumption of ice cream. In Aguas Claras and Los Cerezos, for example, ice cream trolleys are observed in streets and parks, with children gathering around them (figure 6.6). These old trolleys or 'little cars' are traditional and may be seen as part and parcel of the open space, as are the bells or music that they use to attract the children's attention.

Figure 6.5: 'Tiendas' in Danubio and Nueva Argentina
Left, terrace and *tienda* in front of the pitch in Danubio; right, a *tienda* in Nueva Argentina.

Figure 6.6: Ice cream trolleys in Los Cerezos (left) and Aguas Claras (right)

Traditional games

There are a number of games related to open spaces that can be viewed as cultural manifestations (Niño and Chaparro 1997). They are relatively common in popular settlements and uncommon in the rest of the city. *Tejo*[30] is the best example. It can be played in an open space, as seen in Aguas Claras (figure 6.7), or indoors, but it is always related to the open space at the front. It is a traditional rural game from the centre of the country, and as some authors argued (Garcia Canclini 1989; Niño and Chaparro 1997; Rojas and Guerrero 1997) it may be related to the communities' rural past. Another traditional game is '*rana*',[31] however, this game needs to be played indoors or under cover, but like *tejo*, it usually extends into the open space. These two games are mainly played by men; however it is not uncommon to see women playing. Music and beer are part of the entertainment in such games, which sometimes may also involve food and partying; however, as is the case with other activities in open spaces which include drinking, conflicts can and do arise.

There are a number of other traditional games observed in the *barrios*, but not usually to be seen in higher-income residential areas; among the most common are '*trompo'* (as seen in La Andrea, figure 6.8), '*golosa', 'ponchados', 'checa'*, and '*bolas*'. All of them are open-space related and observed in parks and streets in the *barrios*.

[30] Tejo is a group activity which consists of throwing a metal disc the size of a fist from a distance of 20 – 30 metres to hit a wick.
[31] Metallic rings thrown into the mouth of a metallic frog from the distance.

Figure 6.7: *Tejo* court in Aguas Claras

Figure 6.8: *Trompo* in La Andrea park

Religious beliefs

Open spaces in popular settlements are also the subjects of religious manifestations. The case studies show three types of religious use in addition to the social-religious celebrations of Christmas and Easter noted earlier: first, the church situated in the main street or the park and its interaction with the open space (in Aguas Claras and Nueva Argentina, for example); secondly, the shrine in the park (in Danubio for example); and thirdly, the religious images on the house façades (in Los Cerezos for example).

In all 57 cases explored for this research, at least one Catholic Church was located within each *barrio*, and most of them also had one or more churches of other faiths, particular those of Evangelical and Jehovah's Witness groups.[32] The location of the

[32] This is relatively recent phenomenon. About 20 years ago, Catholic Churches were debatably the only ones with a presence in the *barrios*; but today, other denominations 'compete' for the congregation.

Catholic Church in the *barrio* emulates, when possible, the location of churches in the city's central areas: they are usually found around the edges of the plazas, to emphasise their importance (Niño and Chaparro 1997). Several examples are found in the 57 cases, one of the most interesting, due to its conflict-laden evolution, being Tanque Laguna (figure 6.9), which was dealt with in chapter 5. Among the six cases studies, the Catholic Church found in Nueva Argentina follows the convention of locating at the edge of a communal space (figure 6.10); however, it is noteworthy that the Evangelical Church (in space rented from the JAC) is placed beside it. In Aguas Claras a Church built with temporary materials is sited on the *barrio*'s main road (figure 6.10). The role of the church has possibly diminished in recent years in the *barrios*, but it is still significant, and influences the use and the meaning of open spaces.

Figure 6.9: Tanque Laguna *barrio* park

Figure 6.10: Churches in Nueva Argentina and Aguas Claras
Left, Nueva Argentina's Catholic Church in front of the park and on its left the space rented for the Evangelical Church; right, the Catholic Church in Aguas Claras.

Shrines and especially religious images on the façades of houses are common in the *barrios*. For Hernandez Bonilla (2004) shrines are not only expressions of religious faith but are also the result of everyday actions of use and appropriation. Rojas and Guerrero (1997) argue that religious images are important because of their historical, cultural and identity-giving values. In Danubio, a shrine has been erected in one of the corners of the park (figure 6.11). It is a closed, cave-like space that is not observable at first glance. People explain that a former JAC president put it there, and he and his family carry out basic maintenance from time to time, cleaning the 'cave' and decorating it with flowers. Similarly, religious images, such as the ones found in Los Cerezos (figure 6.12), are part of the imaginative consciousness of the *barrio* and they impact on the perception of open spaces.

Figure 6.11: The shrine found in Danubio park

Figure 6.12: Religious images over façades in Los Cerezos

Community and political activities

Many authors acknowledge the political dimension of public (open) spaces (Niño and Chaparro 1997; Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003; Madanipour 2003; Paramo and Cuervo Prados 2006). They are important for community participation activities and political activism, helping to develop democracy and build concern about governance. In the *barrios*, community- and politically-related activities are observable, especially in the *cancha* and the community hall, most of them being organised by the JAC. As explained in previous chapters, the JAC in the *barrio* is the main community organisation, with political interests which are 'negotiable' in relation to current politicians and candidates. While data was being collected in the La Andrea phase one park, for example, the Mayor's office and the JAC were organising a community cultural event called: '*Bogotá, Territorio de Paz'* (Bogotá, Land of Peace), and a temporary stage was built over a pitch (figure 6.13). According to Martha (current JAC president), these events are important because they contribute to getting the community together and to working with the mayor's office towards projects of mutual interest.

Figure 6.13: Community event in the La Andrea phase one park

In Danubio, Arturo, the JAC president interviewed (December 2008) openly commented on how they had a meeting in the park to distribute some land titles to families. Councillors and *ediles* (local politicians) were invited to hand out land titles with an obvious political interest, related to winning support in forthcoming elections. As discussed in previous chapters, JAC is a leading actor in community and political arenas in the *barrio.* Owing to the fact that it also has responsibility for the open spaces, its involvement in such activities is clear. Two further elements

confirm this, namely, the community room and the loudspeaker found in some *barrios*. The community room is administered by the JAC and used mostly for community and political activities. Although it is a closed space, its use is very public and related to the *barrio* open space. Also controlled by the JAC is the loudspeaker, a curious element found in many *barrios*. In Aguas Claras for example, it is placed in the main street (figure 6.14), while in Villa Sonia it is found within the park. It is used to make announcements, to call meetings, to announce the arrival of someone from the government, to advertise a campaign or even to invite locals to vote in elections. The loudspeaker is arguably part of the open space, a landmark (Rojas and Guerrero 1997), but also as an element of the popular imaginary which can be linked to a provincial past.[33]

Figure 6.14: Loudspeaker in Aguas Claras main street

Cultural manifestations in open spaces, as well as social activities, contribute to shaping these places. A good range of cultural phenomena have been identified in the case studies and discussed in this section; it can be argued that some of them are distinctive, and help us to understand the special relationship between people and place in these areas and how residents make such places 'their own'. The next section will explore the recreational and commercial uses of open spaces which, as will be seen, have several connections with the above exposition. Ultimately, they are another kind of manifestation of social and cultural practices.

[33] In some Colombian villages loudspeakers can also be found, usually in a central park or square, close to the Church, and under the control of the priest.

6.4 Recreational and Commercial Consumption: Functional Construction

6.4.1 Open Space as Playground

The previous section began to address the dichotomy between the 'ordinariness' and 'extra-ordinariness' of *barrio* open spaces, bearing in mind the complexity involved in approaching the subject of popular settlements. In this regard, further questions are raised: do 'informal' settlers want to attain 'formal' status one day? Do some uses of *barrio* open space emulate those found in the 'formal' city? Is the materiality observed in popular settlements 'in transit' to 'formality'? There are no simple answers to these questions. Imitation of more affluent groups and an aspiration in terms of 'imagined futures', as Kellett (2009) suggests, are helpful ideas to address these questions (the ideas will be discussed further in chapter 7). Helpful also is the idea that formality and informality are closely interconnected (Bromley 1978; Moser 1994; Kellett 1995; Santos 2000; Ward 2004); in other words, the dividing line between them is difficult, if not impossible to find. 'Ordinariness' in approaching these settlements can contribute, too, to help the observer apprehend them just as they are and not in terms of formality or informality. However, in practice it is more complicated than that, and there is a tacit – and sometimes explicit – comparison with the 'formal', to help us understand some issues, and in this regard the assumption that formality is the objective, which is not necessarily the case. It can be argued that this is the ambivalent 'nature' of popular settlements: complex, contradictory to some extent, and full of possibilities of exploring the social and the urban. With this in mind, this section continues to explore the consumption of open spaces.

As discussed in chapter 2 and explained earlier in this chapter, the everyday and the functional construction of space overlap and complement each other. In the *barrios*, 'necessary' uses of open spaces, as explained by Gehl (1987: 13), such as their capacity as through-routes, are linked with functional actions or 'optional' ones:

‘These activities take place only when exterior conditions are optimal, when weather and place invite them’. Among these *barrio* activities, the most visible is active recreation; which can also be seen as a social and cultural activity. In the *barrios*, open spaces and playgrounds are synonymous, confirming Beardsley and Werthmann’s (2008) arguments. The 57 cases explored for this research show evidence of this: more than half the open spaces are sports fields (table 4.3) and nearly all have playgrounds. But playing is not an activity confined to parks, streets being perhaps the more usual location: ‘ children tend to play more on the streets, in parking areas, and near the entrances of dwellings than in the play areas designed for that purpose’ (Gehl 1987: 27).

The streets are the first and most accessible play spaces for the *barrio* children. The house is limited in terms of space and social opportunities, and children prefer to be in the street with their friends. ‘The youngest children play football, ride their bikes or take their toys out to the street; in most cases they are looked after by their older sisters or the *“gallada”* (group, gang) to which they belong’ (Rojas and Guerrero 1997: 23). Young children are also supervised by their mothers through the open doors or windows of the family home. For teenagers, streets become a second home: ‘The house is boring, is like being in “jail”; freedom is the street, a place to share with friends and express themselves in; the street is the entertainment centre’ (Rojas and Guerrero 1997: 23). The six case studies confirm this: streets are for play; regardless of whether the street is dilapidated as in Aguas Claras or Villa Sonia, or it takes the form of a stairway, due to the topography, as in Tanque Laguna, children are observed playing there (figure 6.15). Through play, children and young adults connect with other social and cultural activities within the *barrio* and its society, and develop ways to appropriate the space and build identity. Young adults look for ‘their’ space in some streets, corners or parks. However, this is not always a conflict-free process, as will be discussed.

Figure 6.15: Playing in the streets
Top left, children playing and riding bikes in Villa Sonia; top right, children literally in the middle of the street playing in Los Cerezos; bottom left, children and adults in Aguas Claras' main street; and bottom right, a stairway in Tanque Laguna also used as a place to play.

In functional terms, *barrio* parks are devoted to play and to sports. They usually have one or more (as in Danubio) multi-functional pitches (to play basketball or '*micro'* - small-size football – or Volleyball, figure 6.16) and several playgrounds with metallic or wooden structures (figure 6.16). The rest of the park is paved or set with green areas, also suitable for play. As in the streets, playing in the park is a social activity which connects participants with others; although in the park, the actors differ somewhat from street users. Young children are not usually observed, unless accompanied by their mothers, while adult users tend to be present in larger numbers at weekends. But the main users of these spaces on a daily basis seem to be the young adult age group. One of the main activities developed in parks is a *'micro'* (football) championship organised in intra-*barrio* or inter-*barrios* groups. This event, which usually runs for a few months at weekends, attracts quite a number of people

who go to see the matches. After the match is finished, the celebrations begin (no matter what the result), usually including drinking beer, music and sometimes dancing and food. Social relationships are also developed, and at the same time conflict sometimes arises. Social and cultural practices are developed around the sporting activity which also contribute to generating relationships with the space and to its transformation.

Figure 6.16: Playing in the *parques*
Left, multi-functional pitch in Danubio park; right, playground furniture in La Andrea park.

Figure 6.17: Aguas Claras parks
Appropriation of space by particular groups. Left, teenagers are playing 'inside' the park; right, others stand around and chat.

Through the medium of play, social and cultural connections are revealed. Perhaps the best example here is the use that teenagers make of these spaces, since they are the main users. Young adults try to make these spaces 'theirs', especially in the evenings and when no children or anyone else is using the parks. This situation is reinforced physically by the railings round the pitch: you look in at them, and they look out at you, both understanding that this is how they want it to be, with or

without railings (figure 6.17). The teenagers can be observed playing ball, or chatting among themselves, boys and girls alike. Sometimes they listen to music, and smoking and drinking have also been observed on occasion.

6.4.2 Commercial Activities

Functionally speaking, open spaces in the *barrios* mean recreation and commerce. Recreation is perhaps the most visible use of open spaces in the *barrios*, but commerce is increasingly significant. Recreational facilities are a characteristic of open spaces in popular settlements, and commerce is a widespread tendency in open spaces in general, as Carmona (2010: 145) explains: '... there has always been a strong link between commerce and urban public space...'. However, commercial activities are also characteristically observed in *barrio*s' open spaces, and it can be argued that they are not only economic functions but also social and culture-building manifestations. Commercial activities within open spaces can be divided into two types: commerce based in buildings which nevertheless relates to the streets and parks; and commerce taking place in the open spaces themselves. In the first type, the '*tienda*' (local store) with its variations, is the main commercial manifestation; regarding the second type, street-vending is the most visible example. As the case studies show, each of them provides and allows particular ways of using and appropriating open spaces.

Economic activity in the *barrios* is seen as a way to generate additional income for families; sometimes it is even the main income source. The house is the first source of possibilities, including plot subdivision, renting of rooms and independent flats, and home-based enterprises (Kellett 1995). The home 'is also a place of production' (Kellett and Tipple 2000: 203); and the room to rent or '*poner un negocio'* (to have a business) in the front of the house is usually something the resident will consider. This economic use of the home reinforces the resident's relationship with the open space; not only owing to the practical reason of having limited indoor space, as well as the need to engage in social exchanges, but also for economic transactions. Commercial activities conducted from the home and from the open spaces range

from selling ice cream through the window of a living room, via major housing refurbishments, to carpentry or metal-beating workshops or medium-sized supermarkets, that generate the use and appropriation of the streets and parks that front onto them. Included in the range, and perhaps the most common form of commerce, is the *'tienda'* (local store), also known as '*miscelanea'*, or *'panadería'* (bakery) (figure 6.18).

Figure 6.18: *Tiendas*
Left, a *panadería* in los Cerezos, a grocery store a little further down; right, a *panadería* in Usme (one of the 57 cases) which also has phone and internet services.

The *'tiendas'* are not only trading places, but also social centres for the community (Coen, Ross *et al*. 2008). Residents go to the *tienda* not only to buy goods (usually relying upon direct credit from the owner: '*fiado*'[34]), including beer to drink indoors or outside on the pavement or in the park, but also to tell their own stories and to hear from the others (Rojas and Guerrero 1997). The *'tendero'* (*tienda*'s owner and seller) is also the community 'adviser' (*consejero*) and is usually someone who knows the *barrio* and its people well (Rojas and Guerrero 1997; Coen, Ross *et al*. 2008). Demonstrably the *tiendas* are part of the social and cultural dynamics of the *barrios,* and their relationship to open spaces is conspicuous. In this respect they can be seen as a third, or semi-public, space following Carmona's (2010) arguments. In the six case studies, the use and social significance of the *tiendas* can be observed; especially in older and more consolidated settlements like La Andrea or Danubio, where many different types of *tienda* can be found. Among the different types of

[34] '*Fiar*' (give credit) is not just a financial transaction, it is also a tradition in the *barrios*. Often people prefer to buy in the *tienda* rather than in the supermarket, being willing to pay a little more if they can settle later. This also helps to make social relationships closer between the *tendero* and the people.

tienda, one is of relatively recent appearance in the *barrios* and has gained an important place in them, both in terms of practical and of social significance: it is the *'tienda de minutos'* (phone and internet shop) (figure 6.19). This is a place where phone calls to landlines and mobiles can be made, and where one can connect to the internet. They are becoming increasingly popular in the *barrios*, and in common with other Latin American countries (Averweg and Villanueva 2009), they are turning into new meeting points, especially for young people.

Figure 6.19: *Tienda de minutos* in Usme (one of the 57 cases)
The sign announces the cost per minute to mobile phones.

In terms of economic activities developed directly within open spaces, street vending is the most common. Street vendors are a widespread phenomenon in Bogotá, one which is perceived in a polarised way; on the one hand, it is seen as a valid way for poor people to earn their living, and on the other hand it can be regarded as an invasion of public space-that needs to be controlled (Donovan 2008). In the *barrios*, however, the second view is not commonly heard, at least not from the community itself. It is also the case that less street trading is seen in the *barrios* than is seen in the city centre. It may be less prevalent, but it still exists, and the more consolidated the settlement, as with La Andrea, the more street trading is observed (figure 6.20). However, most of the case studies show that street vending is a feature that generates activity in open spaces, and it is also directly connected to specific events such as the bus stop or the Sunday football match in the park.

Figure 6.20: Street vendors in La Andrea
Fruit and vegetables sold on the street. This activity mainly takes place on Saturdays and Sundays, although some street vendors may also be found on the main streets on weekdays.

The bus stop at the end of the line in Aguas Claras illustrates this, as with many other popular settlements of Bogotá (Niño and Chaparro 1997; Rojas and Guerrero 1997). Early in the morning and late in the afternoon, when there are greater numbers of people coming and going, street vendors are observed. Some of them are people from the *barrio* who see a chance to sell an '*arepa'* (maize bread) or a corn on the cob to people who are waiting for the next available bus or have just alighted from one. Other goods also figure in street trading: items that are bought wholesle elsewhere and sold on on a retail basis, such as small toys, posters and illegally-recorded CDs or cassettes. Football matches and other community events on streets and parks, such as in Danubio's and Nueva Argentina's *inter-barrios* games, are opportune moments for neighbours to set up as temporary sellers of '*perros calientes'* (hotdogs), *'obleas'* (home-made snacks, figure 6.21), ice creams and other light food. Another use of open space in relation to economic activities is observed when a store makes use of the pavement to advertise their products or simply to enlarge the commercial area, as in Nueva Argentina (figure 6.21) where some kinds of groceries are sold directly on the street. Stores extend into open spaces in different ways, as Rojas and Guerrero (1997: 20) explain: 'Commerce is extended into the street through loud-speaker music, the visual display of offers and discounts and the smell of perfumes, herbs and food'. Economic activities in open spaces also involve social and cultural practices; for example, eating and drinking. Commercial actions related to open spaces are therefore not only income-generating actions, but also form part of open space use and appropriation strategies.

Figure 6.21: Using open space for commercial activities
Left, *obleas* are offered in the Chuniza park (from the 57 cases); this is a mobile activity that can be moved to another place when needed. Right, grocery store in one of Nueva Argentina's streets, the pavement being used to store, lay out and sell the different items.

6.5 Conflictive Use: Power Construction

6.5.1 Power Relations and Conflicts among Users

It can be argued that the ambivalence between the formality and informality of popular settlements is brought to the foreground in discussions of power and conflict. *Barrios* can be seen as transgressing formal laws and practices. They usually start out in defiance of the existing urban planning norms by invading land or obtaining it from an illegal developer. But soon after this, the residents start negotiations with the municipality to obtain public services. It could be claimed that most of the *barrios* start life in a conflict-laden way, but they are an integral part of the city and therefore have negotiating power. This power can be seen explicitly in the relationship with politicians, as was discussed in the previous chapter. In order to develop, *barrios* initiate informal mechanisms that then turn into formal ones; this process, however, is not free from conflict. Housing consolidation and also the production of open spaces, follow a similar path as discussed in chapter 5. In the use of open spaces, formal and informal mechanisms are observed for dealing with conflicts and establishing a power balance between users. For example, calling the

police to report drinking and noise in a park is a 'formal' mechanism used by some to deal with a 'problem'; graffiti and vandalism can be seen as 'informal' responses for dealing with another 'problem' (exclusion, for example). On these bases, this section will discuss the power construction of open spaces, which are usually seen as inherently conflictive.

Public and open spaces lie at the centre of the public realm, and have political meaning and a power symbolism (Madanipour 1999; Rosenthal 2000). In this regard, conflict between different actors involved in their creation, transformation and use is not uncommon. For Low (2000: 128) the 'production and construction of space [is] contested and fought over for economic and ideological reasons, and understanding them can help us to see how local conflicts over space can be used to uncover and illuminate larger cultural issues'. Van Deusen (2002: 150) tends to confirm this by arguing that 'public [open] space is always a space of conflict: it is a site for struggle over who controls and who has access to it, who determines its constitution, and how it is reproduced'. In terms of use, restrictions to access and control of open spaces, and related activities are the main issues that provoke conflict among popular settlers. Kilian (1998) suggests that these restrictions can be understood as power relationships, and these relationships are especially important in open spaces. He argues that urban open spaces contain three categories of user: first, the inhabitants; second, the visitors; and third, the strangers, and conflict is all about the inclusion–exclusion of those groups.

In popular settlements these groups can be seen as: first, the direct users or people who live around the open space; second, people from the *barrio* or nearby areas who use the open space; and third, people from further afield (as is usually the case) who want to take control of the space for a particular reason. This group may include young people, because they are often neglected and excluded from other spaces, and are in search of their 'own' space. There is a fourth group represented by local authorities and community representatives, such as the JAC for example. Conflicts over the use of open spaces occur between the groups and within the groups over their different visions of open space usage.

The case studies show two main sources of conflict over the use of open space: one is in terms of assertion of rights over a territory, which can relate to access, control and security issues; and the other relate to conflicts arising out of everyday use. The two may overlap, and a conflict that starts out as an everyday use problem might change into a territorial issue, and vice versa. Young people's use and appropriation of open spaces is a good example of this and also confirms that conflicts are about power relationships. The first source of conflict, on territorial appropriation, requires further explanation, and can open up fruitful analysis on how open spaces in the *barrios* are socially constructed. This will be discussed in the next section. The second source of conflicts – over everyday use – is also significant and is explored further below.

- Conflicts relating to cars and buses, insofar as they are driven and sometimes owned by popular settlers (who keep them close to their homes), are relatively frequent; they are seen as invading open space (Gehl and Gemzoe cited in Carmona 2010). Car ownership is not as uncommon as might be thought, and it can be argued that the more consolidated the *barrio* is, the greater its tally of private cars. For example in La Andrea, the most consolidated case in the study, car parking is a main source of conflict. While the transformation process was taking place, the question of parking space motivated a long and acrimonious dispute among residents of the '*ocho'* park, as explained in the previous chapter. Although in the end cars were officially banned from the park, nevertheless, as Martha states, the problem remains: '*On Sunday mornings it is not difficult to find one or two cars that have been left all night, probably by someone who has been drinking in one of the nearby bars'*.
- For some residents ball games are also seen as inconvenient, because of the noise and the risk to their window panes. The conflict is quite tense in Villa Sonia where houses are very close to the pitch; but it is also present in a milder form in La Andrea, Nueva Argentina and Los Cerezos. It is non-existent in Aguas Claras and Danubio, where the locations and topography of parks prevent this from arising.
- Commerce on streets and in parks is regarded by some problematic, because it impedes people from walking freely. In the same respect, traders taking their

goods out onto the pavement is seen as an open space invasion. Both types of commercial appropriation are seen in the six case studies, but at a higher level in La Andrea's and Nueva Argentina's streets. However, not all the residents see this as a problem, some even arguing the opposite, such as Marco Fidel in Nueva Argentina, who believes street vendors are a good thing because of the services they provide and the activity they create on the streets.

- Daily maintenance activities are a major concern for most, especially rubbish left in streets and parks. Plastic rubbish bags are taken to pavements and park corners several days before the municipal waste disposal company actually collects them. Dogs may break into these bags, and rubbish is spread all over the place. Rubbish bags are even abandoned far away from the home by some in order to make this 'somebody else's problem'. Associated with maintenance and cleaning, vandalism and graffiti are also observed, the first directed particularly at the rubbish bins installed by the municipality. These two themes will be examined further in the next section.
- Lastly, conflict over use can centre around the meetings and celebrations held in open spaces. Music (and noise), eating, drinking, smoking and rubbish left behind the following day, and the general impact of so many people in the same place at the same time, have a major impact on the surroundings. This is not only a problem for large groups celebrating, but sometimes a handful of people organising small parties in the park or on the street undermine peoples' tranquillity and sense of security, as will be further explored in the following section.

6.5.2 Access, Control, Security and Territorial Appropriation

Use conflicts over open spaces can also be seen as access and control issues; in other words, power relationships, as Madanipour (1999: 880) points out: 'Control of public space is therefore essential in the power balance in a particular society'. In the *barrios*, local government is in theory one of these controllers by means of the laws and regulations in force in the city as a whole; however in practical terms, it is the community who explicitly and implicitly organise the codes of use and try to operate

them. In this respect Lawson (cited in Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 108) 'argues that people collectively inhabiting an area tend to make "rules" governing their use of space [...],[while] some rules are a matter of local social and cultural convention'.

These rules were set up by the first category of open space users, defined by Kilian (1998) as the inhabitants or house owners. Such rules will usually be challenged by the two other groups, visitors and strangers, who regard them as contestable controls that mediate power relations. In the *barrios*, these other two groups are represented; first, by people who make use of open spaces, particularly parks, outside of regular hours; second, by young people, both those from inside and those from outside the *barrio*; and third, by gangs, also from both within and outside the settlement. Usually these three groups are perceived as one, hence the tendency to stigmatize young people residing in the *barrios;* however, evidence shows that this is not always the case. These groups are also associated with crime, or 'more correctly, the fear of crime' (Carmona 2010: 130). Using different techniques, communities and local authorities try to control these groups' access, enclosing open spaces with fences and railings (however, in comparison with its use by the more affluent groups of the city, this approach is rarely used), hiring guards (also rarely found in the *barrios*) or community wardens. Communities also use soft controls or symbolic restrictions (Carmona 2010) like the loudspeaker, the street alarm,[35] or simply the conscious feeling of being observed. '[...] most commentators would agree with Jane Jacobs' basic prescription that public peace is kept primarily by the network of voluntary controls that most individuals in society subscribe to [...]' (Carmona 2010: 131).

The first of these 'transgressor' groups are people, especially men, who use the parks at irregular hours to drink alcohol and smoke soft drugs. Noise, vandalism and crime are associated by the community with these kinds of users. Occasionally a representative of the community tries to stand up to them, if they know someone in the group, but most of the time they end up by calling the police to sort out the problem. Riaño (1993) found a similar picture in Ecuador, in the *barrios* of Quito, where besides drinking, betting games were observed. Hernandez Bonilla (2004:

[35] A bell, in some houses of the street, which is operated when something is happening to alert the rest of the people.

282) recorded the same situation in the '*colonias populares'* (popular settlements) in Mexico, where 'this contributes to the detrimental image of public spaces'. In the six case studies, residents claim they frequently have to deal with this kind of problem; however, certain times of the year – Christmas for example, or during events such as football games – tend to be the worst. La Andrea's case is illustrative:

> *For nearly two months we had the same problem every Sunday, Santafé football team fans gathered in our park after the match to celebrate, whatever the result had been for the team. They got drunk, smoked marijuana and made a lot of noise, it was scary for us getting in or out from our houses when they were there. We used to call the police and they removed them from the park, however, police sometimes took a long time to come and lately they have not shown up. One day, a member of the community faced them and talked to the leader of the group, and got him to promise not to come again. They have complied*.
>
> Interview with Martha, La Andrea resident, December 2008.

The second group consists of young people, mostly of around 15 to 25 years old, although younger and older individuals may also be present. They are the most frequent users of *barrio* streets and parks, but ironically, they are generally seen as 'strangers' to the community, who should be kept at arms' length. 'Youngsters, especially male, are the most clearly identifiable group in the open spaces of the *barrios*. They walk along specific routes: they are the "owners of the streets" in the evenings and at night; they gather in front of "*tiendas*" [local stores] and electronic games stores; they walk constantly along streets, alleys and parks; they join together at street corners for long hours to chat, drink beer and even to dance' (Segovia and Oviedo 2000: 63).

VIERNES 12 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2008 EL TIEMPO

BOGOTÁ 1-27

SECRETARÍA DE GOBIERNO LANZA PLAN PARA PROTEGERLOS

Violencia se ensaña contra los jóvenes

Alcaldía busca apoyar programas culturales, deportivos, ambientales y de participación política para evitar que sean víctimas o victimarios.

Las cifras dejan en claro la magnitud de la violencia juvenil en Bogotá. Este año, 406 jóvenes han sido asesinados, 81 han decidido acabar con sus vidas, 126 fueron involucrados en crímenes y, además, los menores entre 14 y 18 años cometen el 55 por ciento de los atracos callejeros.

A ello hay que agregarle que el 60 por ciento de los jóvenes que cometen delitos confiesa que minutos antes consumió algún estupefaciente, siendo más evidente esta relación en las localidades de Engativá, Kennedy, Suba y Ciudad Bolívar, según cifras del Insti-

Cada vez más son los jóvenes que se ven involucrados en la comisión de delitos y que previamente han consumido licor o drogas.

Lo que presentan los jóvenes

Las iniciativas juveniles que se han presentado hasta ahora son, en su mayoría, de tipo cultural (70 por ciento), según explica la Secretaría de Gobierno. Las demás son deportivas, ambientales, de medios alternativos de comunicación (cineforos, revistas, radio escolares), y otras generan procesos de participación política y alfabetización. La idea es que en el 2009 se incrementen en el número de propuestas.

Figure 6.22: 'Violence shows young people no mercy'
12 December, 2008, 'El Tiempo' newspaper (printed version).

Young people in the *barrios* are synonymous with streets and the night, and they share intricate social and cultural codes which only they know: the language (‘*la jerga del parcero’*), the music and the clothes (‘*la pinta’*) (Rojas and Guerrero 1997). Probably because of this, as well as their naturally rebellious attitude (due to age) and their limited education and employment possibilities, they are looked upon with suspicion by the community. In the same light they are seen as subjects of gang-related issues and of violence involving different groups, and they sometimes become part of these in reality (figure 6.22).

Figure 6.23: Murals, graffiti, and vandalism in open spaces
Top left, mural on Nueva Argentina’s community room, in front of the park; top right, graffiti in La Andrea’s phase one park; bottom, vandalism of park furniture, left in Villa Sonia against a rubbish bin (it was left with no base), right in Danubio, a vandalised bench. Rubbish bins and benches are the main targets of vandalism.

As with gangs, groups of young people try to mark their territory, as a way to stamp themselves onto the place and leave something to remember them by. ‘To speak about a territorial construction [appropriation], we need to relate it to a group of practices undertaken by the subjects of territorialisation [youngsters] to recognise

themselves within that social experience' (Silva 1992: 72). Although such practices are not openly accepted, they may also use murals, graffiti and vandalism to express themselves and 'mark their territory' (figure 6.23).

These practices are seen as clandestine activities for challenging the controls established by the first group of users of open spaces, the inhabitants, or controllers, in Kilian's parlance (1998). The six case studies all report 'problems' in this respect, and the parks and some walls tend to confirm this. In Villa Sonia I had the chance to directly experience of this while fieldwork was being undertaken:

> *I was in the park talking with the president of the JAC at around 5pm. There were teenagers – boys and girls of around 15 years old – chatting at the other side of the park. At the same time that I was speaking to Idelfonso, the JAC president, I was taking some photos. Suddenly this group of youngsters (3 or 4) approached us and asked why I was taking photos of them, and demanded the camera. Idelfonso explained the situation, and I showed them the photos, pointing out they were not the target, and after a few tense minutes everything was back to normal. They told us that they had been accused of belonging to a gang – they did not, they said – and they had thought we were taking photos in order to give them to the police.*
>
> Fieldwork notes, December 2008.

The third group is the gangs. Unlike the previous group, gangs are perceived as being connected with vandalism, violence and crime-related activities. Some are related to guerrilla or paramilitary[36] activities, or are perceived as drug dealers; but most of them are linked with everyday delinquency. They are not openly seen in the *barrios*, in spite of what the media commonly report, but contribute to creating these settlements' marginal and dangerous image, possibly based more on rumour than on what they actually do. For example, the 'incident' reported above was the only one I experienced during my fieldwork in Bogotá, and one of the very few I had seen in the course of several years of visiting the *barrios*. However, gangs certainly exist, and popular settlers are quick to warn new visitors: *'do not pass through that street*

[36] Popular settlements have several times been pointed out as underground recruitment agencies for guerrilla groups. That is the case, for example, in the Jerusalem area (including Nueva Argentina) which in the 1980s was accused of harbouring the armed leftist group M-19 (Hataya, 2007). In a similar way, paramilitary groups have permeated popular settlements in the past and this is still an ongoing phenomenon. For example in 'El Tiempo', the 29th of October, 2009: 'Envigado Office [name of a paramilitary group originally from Medellin] wants to replicate the recruitment model of Medellin in the Ciudad Bolivar Locality' (in Bogota) (http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/justicia/).

or place, it may be dangerous because a gang operates there'; it may not always be true but the visitor is not usually inclined to check. 'There are groups in the *barrios* who impose their will using force' (Rojas and Guerrero 1997: 28). Some of these groups are accused of 'social cleansing' (*limpieza social*); these are armed gangsters paid by powerful groups from within or outside the *barrio* to threaten thieves, drug dealers, prostitutes and all those they consider to be 'undesirable' people. Most of the *barrios* have a story about such intimidation, and like many of the crime 'issues' in popular settlements, they are part myth and part reality. This is the case in Danubio, where, according to Lucy and Jose, about five years ago several youngsters were killed in the park because they were found with drugs: '*the shots were heard all around the barrio, only one girl was saved because she implored them not to kill her*.' Myth or reality, gangs are an issue in the *barrios*, and they challenge access to and control of open spaces. Also, in common with young people, gangs try to mark out their territory. The graffiti, vandalism and threatening decals, which sometimes appear on the walls and posts of the *barrio*, are their main tangible tools; but the intangible fear they generate may be the most powerful marker of their presence.

6.6 Emotional and Cognitive Expressions: Experiential and Symbolic Constructions

6.6.1 Attachment and Appropriation

As discussed throughout this thesis, open spaces in popular settlements can be seen as exemplifying the social production and construction of space. Popular settlers are deeply involved in the creation of their own places, sometimes resorting to contestation and conflict to bring about results. Social construction, through use, is a continuation of this production and transformation process 'through people's social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting' (Low 1996: 861-862). But it is also argued that not only do people transform places, but they are transformed by their interaction with places; as Holloway and Hubbard (2001: 7)

suggest: ‘as people construct places, places construct people’. Open spaces, therefore, can be seen as socially produced and constructed places ‘where value and meaning are not inherent [...] they are created, reproduced and defended’(Lombard 2009: 64). People are related to places, and places are related to people in an emotional bond (Groat 1995) or in a subjective and emotional attachment (Cresswell 2004); in popular settlements this relationship can be even greater because people have been involved with places since their production. This relationship between people and place can be seen as the experiential construction of space, and as mentioned earlier, it originates in the everyday use of places, including social, cultural, and functional usages. Literature discussed in chapter 2 introduced theories and concepts of how this relationship can be understood, both in terms of how it impacts on people and on places. Attachment and appropriation may be seen as the main approaches, but as discussed, refinements and further explanations have been developed, such as territorialisation, personalisation, sense of belonging and the identity of places contributing to identity of individuals and communities.

Throughout the chapter, the experiential construction of space has been referred to when discussing social and cultural practices, recreational and commercial consumption and conflictive use; in this section, however, some points will be highlighted and some new issues will be presented. All of them show attachment and appropriation practices.

Social and cultural manifestations

Most social and cultural practices associated with open spaces represent ways in which popular settlers relate to those places, building attachment to them and developing appropriation strategies that in several instances include space transformation. Eating and drinking activities in streets and parks are a good example, with the place undergoing modifications in order to accommodate chairs and sometimes cooking facilities; and the whole environment shifting from a quiet area of circulation to a festive and noisy place. Those places remain in people’s memories, constructing attachment to them. Whenever possible, such as in La Andrea, the site of these manifestations becomes ‘established’ (e.g. the amphitheatre for the ‘*olla comunitaria’*), and it is formally transformed (figure 6.4).

Religious Processions

Another cultural practice which contributes to attachment and appropriation processes are the religious processions and other related activities affecting open spaces – shrines in parks and religious images on house façades. These can be seen not only as pure expressions of faith, but also as social and aesthetic manifestations. Processions, which are observed especially at Easter but also on other religious feasts, such as '*el dia de la virgen'* (Virgin day), are social manifestations that include several activities described throughout this chapter. Shrines and images on façades go beyond expressions of religious faith to become aesthetic manifestations. As Hernandez Bonilla (2004) found in *colonias populares* in Mexico, these expressions are found in Bogotá *barrios* – as in Danubio and Los Cerezos for example (figure 6.12), allowing additional attachment relationships to those involved in transforming them visually and functionally. In other words, it can be argued that religious manifestations closely linked with open spaces may contribute to emotional identification with place, or 'place identity'. Place identity defined as 'a cultural value shared by the community, a collective understanding about social identity intertwined with place meaning' (Harner 2001: 660)

Physical manifestations

Physical or formal expressions regarding façades which shape open spaces can also be seen as attachment and appropriation practices. However, these manifestations will be explored further in the next chapter as design language, form and meaning; it is interesting to point out here how they can also be understood as evidence of experiential construction of space. For example, bright colours on façades may represent a desire to stand out (Carvajalino 2004), or railings may be seen as part of an aspirational language (Kellett 2008). Both cases are expressions of people's attachment to the place and their wanting to show their presence and economic or social status. The space is clearly transformed by these incursions, as is the perception of the place.

Place-naming

Naming open spaces can be seen as a way people establish shared relationships with places and contribute to identifying them and feeling identification with them (Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira 2008). In the 57 cases there are several examples: *Parque Sueños de Vida* (Dreams of Life Park, case 2); *Parque Jardin de los Abuelos* (Grandparents' Garden Park, case 7); *Alameda el Progreso* (Progress Boulevard, case 45); *Calle de la Union* (Re-union Street, case 47); *Parque Tanque Laguna* (Pond Tank Park, case 54); among others. Names represent different things, some of them concern aspirations: *Sueños de Vida* or *El Progreso*; others memorialise histories: *La Union* or *Tanque Laguna*,[37] and others express what residents would like the park to be: *Jardin de los Abuelos*. But all of them connect people with the place, and contribute to building attachment and appropriation.

The case studies also show examples of place naming. The *barrio* '*Manuela Beltran'* where Los Cerezos park is located, bears the name of a famous historic character, perhaps the only female acknowledged in the country's history of independence from colonial rule. Villa Sonia's park is called: '*Parque por un Bien Comun'* (Park for the Common Good), which, along with previous examples, expresses aspiration. And La Andrea's phase three park (figure 5.7) is known as 'E*l Ocho'* ('the eight'), because of the layout of the path design. There are different names for different reasons, but all represent connections, and help to build identities.

Graffiti and other urban traces

As explained previously, access, control and security can be seen as attachment and appropriation practices. However, these actions are usually established by some and contested by others, a factor explained as above in terms of power relations. Appropriation actions vary, from installing a fence to impede access to using social control. Included in this category, and in particular use by contesting groups are graffiti and other urban traces imposed upon open spaces, such as the example of vandalism inflicted on urban furniture (figure 6.23). These expressions are seen as

[37] '*La Union'* street recalls the story of struggle to build the stairway which this project achieved. The community needed to forget some of their 'problems' and work together to achieve it. '*Tanque Laguna*' recalls that the park was initially a pond at the top of the hill, where the municipal water company had a tank, with a struggle taking place over many years to achieve what is observed today.

ways of contesting control, and appropriation on the part of others to try to enforce 'their own terms' on space, 'mark the territory' or simply try to appropriate the space, as Silva (1992) suggests. They can also be seen as transgressive practices, part of the ambivalence between informality and formality.

6.6.2 Cognitive Representations and Symbols

As discussed in chapter two, space is not only socially, culturally, functionally, combatively and experientially consumed; it can also be seen as a 'mental construct' whereby it is not directly apprehended but comes to be understood only through a complicated process of interpretation (Moore 1983). Space, therefore, exceeds what is perceived by the senses and can be understood by what is perceived or constructed by the mind; in other words, space can not only be 'what it is' but also 'what we think it is', in a sort of 'mental or cognitive mapping of urban reality and the interpretative grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live' (Soja 2000: 234).

By the same token, space can also be understood as signs or symbols containing meaning and values, and these are concentrated 'on the role of objects, events and appearances' (Madanipour 1996: 69). What is perceived or constructed by the mind in terms of cognitive representations of space, as urban imaginaries (Silva 1992; Soja 2000) and symbolic representations of space, as objects, events and appearances with meaning and values, opens up a complementary understanding of open spaces in popular settlements. This 'mental and symbolic' construction of space is directly fed by its use and experience, and its relation to its physical setting, language, formal expressions and meaning. The next chapter will discuss this theme further; however, in this section a few ideas and comments will be put forward regarding the *barrio* streets and parks as a matter of imagined and symbolic understanding by popular settlers.

Cognitive representations

'People need links to the world, and some are provided by the spaces they inhabit and the activities occurring within these spaces' (Carr, Francis *et al*. 1992: 187). In popular settlements, cognitive representations of space and urban imaginaries can be seen as connective tools with an urban and modern present which is the city and its cultural consumption patterns; with an imagined future (Kellett 2009); or with a traditional or rural past (Garcia Canclini 1989) - or more likely with all of them. Most social and cultural manifestations connected with open spaces, as explained earlier, can be read as attempts at connection to the past, to the present and to the future.

Traditional games (section 6.3.2) such as '*tejo*' or '*rana*', which are particularly visible in popular settlements, are connective attempts to a rural past and traditions that have been transposed to the city and to the present. Or traditional regional dishes such as '*tamales*' or '*lechona*' (section 6.3.2) which influence the use of streets and parks on weekends in La Andrea. Transport (section 6.3.1) and '*tiendas de minutos'* (cyber-cafes and phone-call stores) (section 6.4.2) are examples of connections to the city and the present. In recent years, transport has played an important role in the *barrios* – excluding Aguas Claras, which is not served by a '*Transmilenio'* line – the '*Transmilenio'* (rapid public road transport system on dedicated lanes, describe by Gilbert as the 'jewel in the crown' of recent transport reforms in Bogotá (2009)) has changed the way people connect with the city, as well as the use and understanding of the open spaces. '*Tiendas de minutos'* can be seen as 'semi-public', or third, open spaces (Carmona 2010) which give instant communication with the city and the world. There are some other open spaces in the *barrios* that convey less positive images of being in the city: images of fear, darkness and violence transmitted by places such as lonely alleys, neglected river banks and blank walls (no windows or any interaction) (Rojas and Guerrero 1997). These images are as 'real' as the observable ones (Silva 1992), and are part of the *barrio* consumption of open space. And lastly, the connections with an imagined future, which is crucial for popular settlers, the aspiration for a better quality of life and how this is reflected in the physical changes to houses and open spaces. Kellett (2009) suggests that this can be

interpreted as an aspirational journey from poverty towards prosperity and social inclusion. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Signs and Symbols

In similar terms, signs and symbols contribute to the mental construction and allocation of meaning to places. They can be seen as working closely together with cognitive representations and urban images of places, and also as a result of the production and consumption processes of open spaces. However, signs and symbols are more related to objects, events and appearances (Madanipour 1996) and the meaning they can convey to individuals and community. In the same way, signs and symbols enhance the use and experience of open spaces and can contribute to building place identity (Lynch 1963), individual, and community identity, in relation to belonging to a place (Proshansky, Fabian *et al*. 1983).

In the *barrios*, tangible and intangible signs and symbols can be extensively 'observed'. Symbols can originate for reasons connected to the community's history, as Garcia, Giuliani *et al*. (1999) argue; in Nueva Argentina the park itself is a symbol of the community struggle to possess that space and make it work. For similar reasons, in Tanque Laguna the community decided to erect a cross in the middle of the park including two plaques commemorating the struggle that went into its creation, and the achievement represented by its realisation (figure 6.24). But arguably, most of the symbols found in the *barrios* come from the everyday use of open spaces. Perhaps one of the most important is the '*tienda*' (section 6.4.2). The six case studies show that this space is not only a trading place, but a social centre for the community and a reference point for people within the *barrio*, as well as being the first meeting place for visitors and newcomers. The bus stop (section 6.3.1) is another important reference point, and in places such as Aguas Claras its importance is even greater, and several social activities are developed in its vicinity. Religious images on the façades of houses and shrines (figures 6.11 and 6.12) also play a role in the symbolic construction of open space, conveying meaning to most members of the community and also contributing to making the place what it is, as found in Danubio and Los Cerezos. Graffiti and murals (section 6.5.2 and figure 6.23) may also be seen as signs within the *barrio* which actually communicate

specific meanings to some observers, but at the same time become an intrinsic part of the open space, as in Nueva Argentina, where it is difficult to imagine the park without the large mural on one of its walls. Lastly, there are certain other places in the *barrio* that have a meaning allocated by communities for different reasons; for example Jose Emilio's bright blue house in Los Cerezos (figure 6.1 left) is a reference point, but any corner can take on a particular significance. '*Barrio* corners can create identity patterns according to the people who use them; there is the musician's corner, the teenagers' corner, the women's gossiping corner, and so on' (Ontiveros and De Freitas 2006: 231).

Figure 6.24: Tanque Laguna commemorative cross and plaques
Left panel reads: 'This is the fruit of the efforts and daily struggles of the organised community of Tanque Laguna, Brisas and Buenos Aires in cooperation with the Bogotá Mayor Office, the IDRD [municipality office], the DAACD [municipality office], and the Fundación Social [ONG]. Collective of community-based groups, Bogotá, 3 October, 1993'. Right panel reads: 'In recognition of everybody's right to recreation, sports practice and the use of free time'.

6.7 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the social construction of open spaces in popular settlements, guided by the second research question, 'What is the relationship between open spaces and the people who create them?' It is argued that as with the social production of open space, the consumption of streets and parks in the *barrios* is socially mediated, and the relationship between place and people is close. People transform open spaces by using and interacting with them, but they are also transformed by this interaction.

The chapter started by debating the special nature of open spaces in the *barrios*. Open spaces are streets and parks. No *plazas* are found here; but rather recreation and sports areas which allocate social, cultural and symbolic activities. Streets are also understood differently: they are not only there so that cars and people can move from one place to another, they are the main social arena of the *barrios* and the children's main play area. Having clarified the context, and, following the literature discussed in chapter 2, the chapter moves on to examine the different dimensions of the social construction of open spaces. This discussion of people-place interactions is divided into four sections for explanatory purposes; however, it is important to insist that interactions are interrelated: social and cultural activities have to be seen with economic and recreational ones, some of them can be conflictive and all of them help to build experiential and symbolic meanings. The everyday construction of open spaces is seen through the social and cultural activities developed thereby. Streets and parks are social building places, but other less traditional 'open spaces' fulfil similar functions – in particular, the bus stop and the *tienda*. Streets and parks allocate a range of social and cultural activities and expressions that are not easily observed elsewhere in the city: celebrations, eating and drinking, traditional games like *tejo* or *rana*, shrines and religious images in houses, among others. Functional construction also shows interesting particularities, streets and parks being places to play, children from their early years seeing the area in front of the home as the place to be, so that, while the types of games may change, open spaces continue to be the

places for them. Arguably, play forms a social building activity in the *barrios*, and through it people connect with others and with the physical setting.

Another important characteristic of open spaces is the commercial activity that takes place within them, and in the same way as play, it can be seen as a social and cultural expression; with the *tienda* as the best example. But open spaces are also the site for power conflicts and struggles over territorial appropriation. These conflicts help to build social relations among the community through negotiating, seeking agreement and finding methods of control; however not all the conflicts are between identified members of the community, a number feature external actors. All of these social space constructions or people-place interactions generate attachment and appropriation, as well as symbolic meanings. Social practices are transformed to accommodate new interactions with open spaces and new and changing actors; and places change to accommodate such new and changing social practices. Some of these changes are observable in the form and design language used, which is the theme of the next chapter.

7.1 Introduction

Having discussed in chapters 5 and 6 the social production and construction of open spaces in popular settlements, chapter 7 aims to discuss the tangible product that is arguably the result, in terms of form, language and meaning. As propounded by Low (1996), the social production and construction of space may be seen as part of the same process, and it can also be linked with the product, as Harvey (1996) points out. Open spaces in popular settlements are largely produced, transformed and consumed by the users themselves, thus it can be argued that the product itself is closely linked to the people. In a similar way, it has been argued in the literature that there is a relationship between culture and built form; for example Rapoport (1988: 58) explains that in informal settlements the settler 'generally attempts to create settings and elements that support components of culture'. If the relationship seems clear, then the question is about how to understand and interpret this tangible and observable production. In this regard, the chapter will focus on the third research question: What is the form and design language used in open spaces and how can it be understood and interpreted?

The chapter is organised into four parts besides the introduction and conclusion. The first part summarises and further explores the main theoretical points to be taken into account in the discussion of the subject. The first of these points uses a twofold, overlapping perspective; on the one hand, it looks at the relationship between culture and the built environment in popular settlements, on the basis, amongst other ideas, of considering popular settlements to be largely similar to vernacular ones. On the other hand, it considers popular settlements as resulting from everyday practices, which also means that the built environment can be understood in terms of everyday urbanism and architecture. The second of these points uses a more direct discussion of the relationship between production, consumption and form, as well as the language of open spaces in popular settlements, introducing the following sections of the chapter: informal urban planning, popular aesthetics and language and meaning. The second part of the chapter examines 'informal' urban planning and the development of open spaces, looking at typologies, the role of green areas and urban

furniture in open spaces and language in general, and the permanent and continuous physical and language transformations of the space. The third section is about aesthetics, arguing that there is a formal expressiveness in popular settlements that could be called 'aesthetics of the *favela*' (Berenstein Jacques 2001) or popular aesthetics. Different perspectives are explored, including perception, legibility, experience and the visual dimension. The fourth section explores language and meaning, arguing that the materiality found in the *barrios* confirms that there are design language ideas behind them and meanings attached to them, but also that they arise as a result of the permanent involvement of the people from the production and through the consumption of the place. The chapter closes with a section which summarises the major points discussed and outlines preliminary findings that will be elaborated further in the concluding chapter.

7.2 Production, Consumption and Design Language

7.2.1 Design Language, Vernacular Settlements and Everyday Architecture and Urbanism

This thesis has discussed the close connection between people and open spaces in popular settlements, owing to their overall involvement in processes of production, transformation and consumption. It is therefore possible to argue that the built environment resulting from this relationship 'represents' the residents to a large extent, an argument in line with the literature (Rapoport 1988; Kellett 1995; Harvey 1996). Kellett (1995: 52) for example, argues that 'it is frequently assumed that people in all societies are attempting to shape their own environment to correspond and support their lifestyle (i.e. culture)'. The built environment can be read as a 'reflection' of people's culture, desires and possibilities and at the same time the built environment impacts upon and transforms people's social and cultural practices. This tangible product found in popular settlements can be seen as a 'design language, with variations expressing the individuality of owners' (Kowaltowski

1998: 300), and displaying more than purely practical responses to poverty (Viviescas, Gomez *et al*. 1989). The richness and creativity that can be found in popular settlements confirm the existence in these areas of a design language and forms with significant characteristics. One way (derived from the literature) of understanding this design language is to consider popular settlements as vernacular environments. Rapoport (1988: 72) compares traditional and popular settlements in terms of process and product, and finds that both 'work well culturally and aesthetically' and are 'vastly superior in terms of cultural supportiveness and perceptual quality than designers working in the same places'. Kellett and Napier (1995: 22), in a detailed study of popular settlements in Colombia and South Africa, arrive at similar conclusions, pointing out that these settlements show an 'architectural expression which can undeniably exist' beyond a sole focus on economic constraints.

A second overlapping perspective – also related to cultural manifestations around the built form – that can be found in the literature (and which helps us understand the design language of the built environment of popular settlements) is that of everyday urbanism and architecture. These are grounded in the ideas of De Certeau (1984) and Lefevbre (1991) regarding the social production of space, in which space is produced by social interactions and everyday use and appropriation. 'The architectural everyday, then, is the spatial practice of dwellers, and raises the idea that cities might be produced by those who inhabit them' (Miles 2000: 3). This aspect is heavily related to production and consumption patterns, which conforms with the arguments of this thesis. Everyday architecture has evolved into everyday urbanism and everyday public space (Crawford 1995; Chase, Crawford *et al.* 1999), ideas that can contribute to understanding the form and language of open spaces in popular settlements. Crawford (1995: 5) argues that '[r]ather than being fixed in time and space, these public spaces are constantly changing, as users reorganize and reinterpret physical space'. Crawford (1995) introduces the idea of movement, linking with the idea of the movement of the *favelas* (Berenstein Jacques 2001) towards understanding the aesthetics produced in these settlements and thus in their everyday public spaces. But this is not the only link found between the ideas of everyday architecture and urbanism and popular settlements; there are several

additional linkages that may contribute to understanding and interpreting the physical production of open spaces in the *barrios*. Perhaps the most important is the idea that the architectural everyday is created by actions of production and consumption, in parallel to what happens in popular settlements. Also that the 'architectural everyday is a kind of vernacular, given to endless local variation' (Miles 2000: 3) or 'architectural forms which are in many cases not [professionally] designed but simply produced' (Miles 2000: 167), linking with the idea of considering popular settlements as vernacular ones and helping us to understand and interpret the design language found in open spaces in these settlements.

7.2.2 People, Place and Product

Notions of vernacular settlements and everyday architecture and urbanism are useful for exploring the physical production of open spaces in popular settlements. Arguably, the common subject underpinning these ideas is the relationship between people themselves and production, consumption and design language. Chapter 5 discussed this relationship in terms of production, while chapter 6 did so in terms of consumption. People are more involved in both the social production and construction of open spaces in popular settlements, compared with upper income areas of the city, where open spaces are not commonly produced by the people, and where, anyway, activities tend to be developed in interior spaces, rather than outside (the home, the shopping centre, the club, and so on).

The people/place relationship in popular settlements is a two-way connection, people transforming the spaces by producing and consuming them, but at the same time people's social and cultural practices are transformed as discussed in previous chapters. It is, therefore, possible to affirm with Holloway and Hubbard (2001: 7) that in popular settlements 'people construct places and places construct people', and social practices in the *barrios* are very much 'place-bound' (Merrifield 1993). In this regard, there is a two-way relationship that can also be understood as place-making, which 'is not just about the relationship of people to their places; it also creates

relationships among people in places' (Schneekloth and Shibley 1995: 1). This also helps to connect with the third part of the relationship presented earlier: the one between form and people, which was partially discussed in previous chapters because it is closely linked with production and consumption practices, and will be elaborated further in this chapter.

This chapter, therefore, aims to explore the materiality created from people's production and social construction practices. Materiality that has been judged by some as largely a response to economic restrictions (Viviescas, Gomez *et al*. 1989); a way of 'getting by' while proper and formal ones solutions are sought,[38] or simply 'ugly', because it does not match with formal standards and has not been created by professionals (Mandoki 2001; Klaufus 2009). This belies the high degree of richness and creativity found in the *barrios* and it can be argued with Berenstein Jacques (2001) that there is an 'aesthetic of the *favela*', which we do not understand only because it has not been studied sufficiently. We may see only disorder, because we have not yet been able to 'discover' the language behind this apparent jumble; what is more, we have not managed to learn from these practices and thus incorporate their lessons into architecture and urban theory and praxis; '[...] on what are the specific tools of spatial design and urbanism which, informed by the urbanisms of the informal, can contribute to the creation of cities of greater integrity, inclusion and diversity' (Fiori and Brandao 2010: 190). This chapter aims to contribute to the understanding and interpretation of this language, from the starting point that it is closely related to the people by means of production and consumption practices, as well as place-making activities. Also, it assumes that this people/place relationship can be seen in terms of social and cultural practices; in other words, that the materiality observed can to a large extent be understood in terms of cultural manifestations around the built environment. And lastly, it is based upon the notion that the ideas of vernacular settlements and everyday architecture and urbanism can further illuminate this exploration.

[38] As much of the housing policies were oriented in Colombia from the 1940s to the 1980s (INURBE 1995)

7.3 Informal Urban Planning

7.3.1 Open Space Typologies and Other Planning Alternatives

> *We do not believe 'informal' means 'lacking form'. It implies, for us, something that arises from within itself and its makers, whose form has not yet been recognised, but which is subject to rules and procedures potentially as specific and necessary as those that have governed official, formal city-making.* (Brillembourg and Klumpner 2010: 120)

Working along the same lines, some authors (Hernandez and Kellett 2010; Lara 2010; Segre 2010) argue for the existence of formal planning in these 'unplanned' informal settlements, but following different logics. As discussed in previous chapters, such logics must be inherent in the production and the consumption of place in popular settlements. Evidence from the data collected for this research suggests that these logics can be summed up in everyday practices related to open spaces, the cultural manifestations associated with them, and practical concerns in terms of economy, linkages with other actors and chances and opportunities in general. This implies that constant change, permanent improvement and movement are the main characteristics of the materiality observed in the *barrios* (Avendaño and Carvajalino 2000; Berenstein Jacques 2001; Kellett 2008). This poses an apparently contradictory challenge: how can a constantly changing urban space be planned? What is more, when the changes correspond to the inhabitants' daily life and therefore cannot be foreseen? This chapter aims to contribute to this debate.

Typologies

Typology is another problematic notion when applied to popular settlements. Typology, understood as a common formal type, is not found in the *barrios*; unless it be a kind of typology that could be described as 'diverse'. As shown in table 4.3, of the 57 cases, 41 are parks, most of them with sports fields; 13 are pedestrianised streets, including stairways, and 3 are other types of structure, considered in the light of open spaces because of their close relationship with them: namely, communal meeting rooms and façade embellishment projects. In terms of formal typologies

(figure 7.1 for streets and 7.2 for parks), the cases show virtually no common formal types in terms of layouts. Each case is unique, as unique as the production and consumption processes which are behind the form observed.

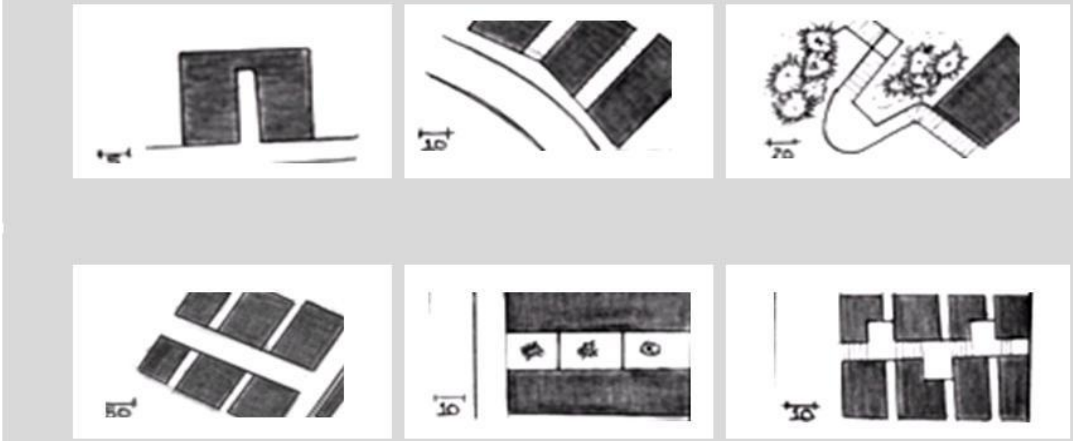

Figure 7.1: Selected streets and stairways from the 57 cases
From left to right and from to top to bottom: pedestrian street in Costa Rica (case 1); La Reconquista (case 9); Santa Cecilia (case 6); San Marti (case 17); Libano (case 29); and Guacamayas (case 46).

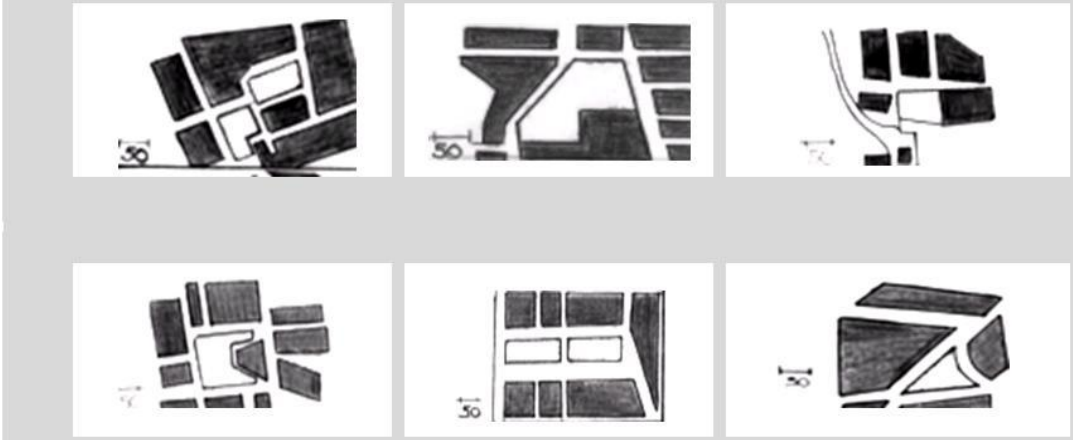

Figure 7.2: Selected parks from the 57 cases
From left to right and from to top to bottom: Brasilia (case 23); San Luis (case 30); Olivares (case 31); Usminia (case 34); Rincon de Galicia (case 52); and Americas (case 18).

The six case studies display a similar diversity: Danubio's park (figure 7.3) is at the crossing point of three different orthogonal grids which meet in a steep area of the

settlement; Villa Sonia's park (figure 7.3) is also the meeting point for a set of orthogonal grids, but in this case the park surface is flat and bordered by streets on three of its four sides; La Andrea's parks (figure 7.3), although formal in origin, exhibit various geometries and types of border; the layout of Nueva Agentina's park (figure 7.4) is a kind of triangle which makes it difficult to accommodate a rectangular pitch, but the production process explains the form; Aguas Claras' streets and parks (figure 7.4) show layouts constricted by both the orthogonal street grid and the steep topography; and Los Cerezos' park (figure 7.4) is a near-perfect rectangle with one street as a border and houses on the other three sides, very close to the open area.

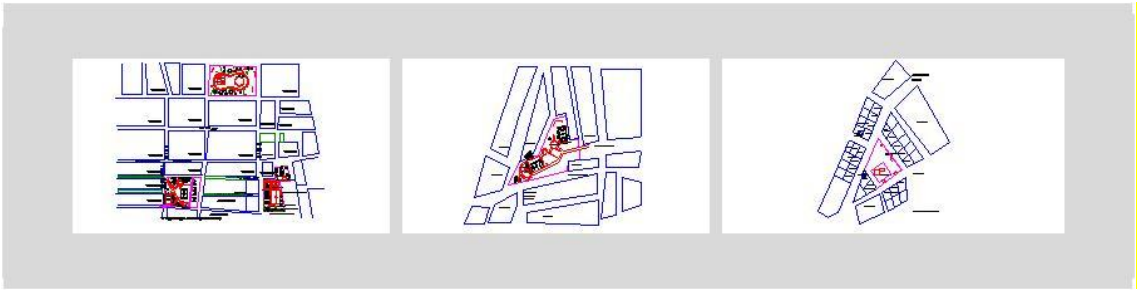

Figure 7.3: From left to right: parks in La Andrea, Danubio and Villa Sonia

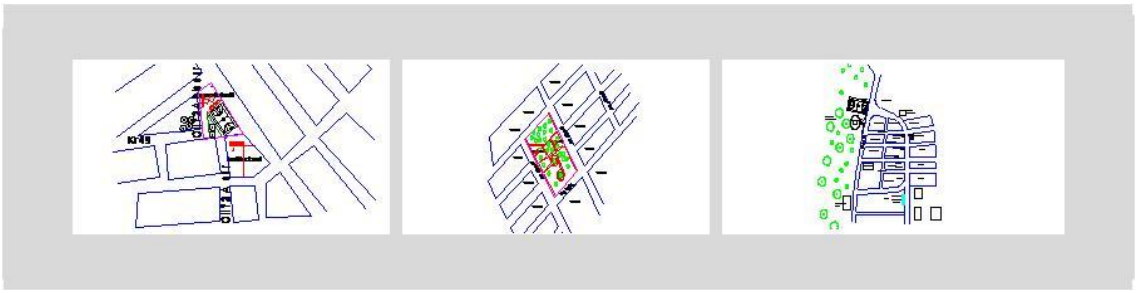

Figure 7.4: From left to right: parks in Nueva Argentina, Los Cerezos and Aguas Claras

Case studies confirm what the 57 general cases show: diversity in formal types, the reasons for this diversity being derived from the production process behind them as explained in chapter 5. Consumption practices have also impacted on the forms observed; the most evident example being the prevalence of sports facilities, but also small acts of transformation in front of houses and *tiendas* to accommodate social and cultural activities: the flowerbeds in la Andrea; the cement chairs at the borders

of the park in Los Cerezos or the terrace of *Doña* Rosa's *tienda* in Danubio, for example. If most of them show differences, there is one similarity observed in terms of layouts: the orthogonal grid and the intention to adapt to it, which even overrides topographical logic. This may be explained as an urban colonial legacy, used with or without conscious awareness of its origins, that is now the most common layout for Colombian urban areas.

Design and planning

Other planning issues observed in open spaces are topography, location, borders, accessibility and circulation. Topography is arguably a major matter in popular settlements, directly affecting the form of open spaces. As explained in chapter 4, these settlements are often developed in peripheral areas of the city and on land with no potential for agricultural use and/or little value for urban development - often this is land having a steep topography. From the 57 cases, more than half (29) are situated on inclines. Location within the settlement can be seen as another planning factor, because it determines the connection of the open space with the rest of the *barrio*. Of the 57 cases, three quarters (42) are placed in central areas of the *barrio*, suggesting this location's importance. This also explains some of the uses which derive from facilities observed in parks; for example, the way they tend to be used as places to meet and socialise.

In terms of borders, accessibility and circulation, the six case studies present data that shed some light on these issues. Borders are diverse and changing; some are completely surrounded by vehicular streets as in the La Andrea phase two park. Others, such as Danubio or the La Andrea phase three park, have no surrounding streets; others are in between the two extremes. The overall accessibility of the park seems to be linked to the way it is used, and at the same time, the uses of the open space promote or limit its accessibility. The La Andrea phase one park and that of Nueva Argentina are highly accessible: they front onto streets with public transport routes. Danubio's and Villa Sonia's are less accessible – to find them, it is necessary to ask around. The La Andrea phase three park, Los Cerezos' and Aguas Claras' parks are the least accessible: asking directions may not be sufficient, you may need someone from the *barrio* to show you there in person. However, in each case, the

reasons are different: Aguas Claras' parks are placed at the periphery of the settlement, while La Andrea and Los Cerezos are in central areas but not easily observed at first sight. Circulation within parks follows Luis Murcia's (La Andrea resident) observation that: 'pathways follow people's circulation', implying that the paved path is built once regular footfall has worn away a pattern of use.

The above-explained planning and design factors may not always be used with conscious awareness, and in some cases they are a mere product of circumstances; however, they are regularly observed in open spaces and manifest a development factor in those places. As layouts, they are related to production and consumption practices and patterns, and are also in constant flux. These layout designs confirm what authors such as Lara (2010: 24) argue: 'Contrary to the definition of the term informal found in the dictionary..., informal settlements have a formal architectural [and urban] structure.' Although contradictory, planning and change can go together; however, it is a 'different' kind of planning which on the one hand involves changes, and on the other allows peoples' daily space transformations by means of functional and symbolic uses.

7.3.2 Green Areas and Urban Furniture

Two other design and planning elements that deserve attention are green areas and vegetation; and urban furniture. Both are considered 'essential for urban design' (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003). While green areas are needed 'to provide comfortable conditions within public spaces [...], levels of sunlight, shade, temperature, humidity [...] [and an] 'aesthetic experience' [...] urban furniture is seen to contribute identity and character, as well as comfort and quality, to the urban space' (Carmona, Heath *et a*l. 2003: 161,162,185). Green spaces and vegetation are seen as controversial in popular settlements: on the one hand they are rarely observed in the *barrios*, leading to the assumption that they do not matter to settlers. As Monteiro, De Matos *et al.* (2006: 2) found in Brazil: 'Vegetation is lacking or only in the form of sparse ground cover'; and when observed such spaces are not always well looked after. On the other hand, when asked about green elements, people tend to demonstrate

enthusiasm: '[a]sked to rate specific positive design elements the survey population cited in sequence: tree-lined street, very visible house, high front fence, cemented lot, big tree on lot, two-storey house and verandas' (Kowaltowski 1998: 309). Urban furniture follows a similar trend; benches, rubbish bins and lamp posts are considered important by the settlers, but are nevertheless frequently vandalised.

In the 57 cases, 20% have no green area or trees at all. Of the remaining 80%, half (23 cases) have some degree of greenery within the open space, and the other half has a considerable amount of green space. The quality and the level of care devoted to those areas varies greatly, some being very well looked after, while others seemed abandoned. The six cases replicate the findings in the 57 cases and the general observations; however, the detail of the case studies allows the reasons behind them to be explored. Villa Sonia's park, for example, has no green space at all (figure 7.5); and there is an evident lack of green areas and trees in the settlement generally. This is partly explained by the arid conditions in this area of the city; the relatively small size of the park and the absence of pavements where trees could eventually be planted is a further reason. However, photos of the park in its early stages (figure 5.8), show clearly observable grass areas. Idelfonso (*barrio* resident) commented that the residents preferred areas where children could play instead of difficult-to-maintain green spaces. In fact, this was observed in the green areas of the other five cases, some parts of which had evident problems regarding maintenance and rubbish. However, untidiness was also observed in Villa Sonia's paved park.

By contrast, Los Cerezos' park has the most green spaces, vegetation and trees, and it appears to work particularly well in terms of use and general care. Luis Emilio (Los Cerezos resident) commented that each house owner has the responsibility of taking care of the front of his house and a portion of the park, including cutting the grass and tending their own garden, if they have one. Not all comply, he noted, but most do. La Andrea's phase three park, or el 'ocho' (figure 7.6) also offers a good example: the park does not have as much greenery as Los Cerezos, but its few green areas, trees and flower beds are very important to people and present an identifiable picture of the open space which makes it unique. The flower beds are an important design element, which as explained in chapter 5, were worked out between the

community and the municipality architect through the design meetings held in the community room. Form, colours and materials are distinctive; but also their use and the meaning given to them, as can be observed in the pride exhibited by '*Don*' Luis when speaking about 'his' garden (figure 7.6).

Figure 7.5: Villa Sonia park and its arid surroundings

Figure 7.6: '*El ocho*' park in La Andrea
Left: green areas and trees; right: '*Don*' Luis proudly indicating 'his' garden

Regarding urban furniture, virtually all of the 57 cases show its existence to some degree. All have benches – wooden, cement or metallic – most of which have been provided by the municipality at some point (the wooden ones are the oldest, while the metallic are the most recent). Rubbish bins and lampposts are found in most cases, with only two cases that lack them; however the number and design vary in each case. Other types of urban furniture found in some cases are: bollards, bicycle

racks, telephones, covered bus stops and '*paralibros*'[39] (figure 7.7)*;* which are arguably related to the consolidation of the open space as well as greater involvement from the municipality. Bollards are made of cement and are to prevent cars from entering and parking in the open space, while bike racks are relatively recent introductions, not only for parks in popular settlements but for the whole city. Public telephones are gradually disappearing, and are being replaced by the '*tiendas de minutos'* (phone and internet stores) which can be found nearly everywhere in the *barrios*; covered bus stops are very rare; and '*paralibros*' present an interesting idea, one which is well-regarded by communities; La Andrea's phase two park has one of these (figure 7.7). The urban furniture found in the six case studies follows the same guidelines as explained for the 57 cases; all have benches, rubbish bins and lampposts and the more consolidated the open space, the more such items it has. This is the case with La Andrea, whose parks have examples of most of the urban furniture types listed; by contrast, in the parks of Aguas Claras, few are found.

Figure 7.7: Some urban furniture found in parks
Left: bollards in La Aldea park (case 21); middle: bicycle rack in Molinos park (case 10); right: '*Paralibros*' in La Andrea phase two park.

An important issue regarding urban furniture is that it is nearly always the target of vandalism: among the six case studies, only La Andrea's phase three park has no trace of this. Corners of benches are broken or the metallic parts are bent, bins are broken and the lights of lampposts are damaged. Vandalism has been discussed in chapter six as a way that different groups mark their territory and appropriate spaces. It also shows the conflictive nature of open spaces, and how communities tackle this;

[39] '*Paralibros*' is a metal book container which can accommodate around 300 books. There are 44 of these units located in different parks around Bogotá, and they act as small libraries especially oriented towards children. Members of the community can borrow books on registration into the scheme. http://www.culturarecreacionydeporte.gov.co/portal/node/80

for example, La Andrea with its strong neighbourhood commitment has reduced this problem. Green areas and urban furniture have a strong relationship with the production and consumption processes of open space, and its appearance, transformation and manifestation can be understood by exploring those processes.

7.3.3 Permanent Transformation

> *The processions, festivals, street vendors and dwellers all result in an ever transforming streetscape – a city in constant motion where its very physical fabric is characterised by this kinetic quality. Furthermore, the kinetic city is incomprehensible as a two-dimensional entity and is instead perceived as a city in motion [...], it constantly modifies and reinvents itself.* (Mehrotra 2010: XI)

Mehrotra (2010) defines the informal city as kinetic. Other authors also recognise the permanent transformation of popular settlements as one of their main characteristics, and how this impacts on the physical materiality observed. '[...][I]nformality is in a state of continual flux, there is not a final product' (Brillembourg Tamayo, Feireiss *et al*. 2005: 252). 'This urban mutation of the urban fabric of the favelas stems from the fact that it is the inhabitants who are responsible for the building and maintenance of their communities' (Fessler Vaz and Berenstein Jacques 2004: 71). This links with previous arguments which connect the production, consumption and form of open spaces in a dialectical relationship. Therefore, it can be argued in terms of urban morphology and physical expression that open spaces are identified by the permanent transformation which results from corresponding permanent production and consumption practices. Evidence from the case studies suggests that the physical transformations of open spaces can be seen in both 'internal' and 'external' factors. Internal factors are those changes associated with the urban layout, the boundaries (surrounding buildings) and the urban furniture and other objects. External are those transformations related to real and virtual connections with the rest of the city and beyond. On the 'real' side, transport is perhaps the most important connection; with regard to the 'virtual', however, television and the internet can be seen as potentially influential connecting factors.

Internal physical transformations derive from everyday major and minor changes in the urban layout and the houses that form the boundaries of open spaces. In the urban scenario, these changes are manifested by the appearance of new paths, new paved and green areas, new trees and gardens, new urban furniture and elements, or the transformation of those already in place. Changes can be effected by small actions such as creating a new garden in front of a house, as in Los Cerezos, or in large actions like a park refurbishment, as in La Andrea. Boundaries also change and provide a changing setting to streets and parks. Different levels of housing consolidation, colours, materials, decoration of façades, and so on – all impact upon open spaces and confirm their characteristic of being in permanent transformation.

As discussed previously, the inside and the outside of the house are closely related to the activities that take place in and out of doors; a similarly close relationship obtains between the housing and the physical setting. What happens to the house directly affects the image of the urban spaces, in terms of their form and language. This is the case with housing and store extensions that impact on open space. Some consider that these actions need to be discouraged because they affect the quality of the space: 'Maintaining equilibrium between private needs and aspirations and the public good has always been the responsibility of planning. It is clear that residents can achieve neither without proper guidance' (Kallus and Dychtwald 2010: 86). This is clearly not the case with popular settlements where residents without 'planning' and 'proper guidance' achieve interesting and appropriate living environment solutions. Or in other words, with different planning and guidance approaches than those implied in Kallus' and Dychtwald's arguments (i.e. not 'professional'). As discussed in chapter 5, planning exists in the form of priorities, resources and negotiation with other actors, including the municipality. And guidance is obtained from different sources including the experience of some residents in design and construction, the municipality with their community programmes, and ONGs and other social actors with their expertise and advice. But in particular, 'proper guidance' derives from residents' needs and aspirations, and their implicit and explicit negotiations with others in order to keep the balance between private needs and the public good.

Therefore, it can be suggested that urban quality, instead of being badly affected, is in fact improved.

Physical transformations coming from outside are more difficult to identify, but they also contribute to the changing setting of open spaces. Transport is perhaps the most evident, and the '*transmilenio*' its most important initiative. This massive transport system for Bogotá, inaugurated in 2001, has changed mobility patterns in the city and has impacted on traditionally poorly-serviced *barrios* (Beckett and Godoy 2010). *Transmilenio* buses and feeders, but also traditional buses, are extensively used by popular settlers, meaning well-used bus stops. In this regard, bus stops become important open spaces themselves and the connections to them also gain in importance. This can be observed in the six case studies; in Aguas Claras the bus stop is perhaps the most important open space of the *barrio*, or in Los Cerezos the route to the bus stop crosses the park. Other external influences derive from virtual means, especially television and the internet. From these sources popular settlers (like everybody else) access images, practices and ideas that may become visions and aspirations that are consciously and unconsciously incorporated into aspects of their lives; and some of them may be manifested in open spaces. Moreover, TV aerials and '*tiendas de minutos'* (phone and internet stores) are part of the materiality observed in the *barrios*. The latter, as discussed in chapter 6, are gradually also becoming meeting places, in what Carmona (2010) calls semi-public or third spaces.

Open spaces in popular settlements change 'from within and from without', and, as with housing and partially also as a consequence of it, open spaces are in permanent transformation. Their material characteristics show the play of constant change and movement, and the motivations behind this in the creation process and in everyday relationships with those places, as in the findings of Fessler Vaz and Berenstein Jacques (2004: 71) in Brazil: 'This analysis of the urban form of the *favelas* points out the process of their constant transformations, the eternal making and remaking of space'.

7.4 Popular Aesthetics

7.4.1 Production, Construction and Aesthetic Experience

Aesthetics is a complex concept which is difficult to define clearly. 'In some cases, it refers to certain characteristics of the subjects or effects on them. In others, it deals with the qualities of the object, the qualities of an act, or the analysis of a social practice such as art, and even of a certain period or style of that practice' (Mandoki 2007: 3). It has been traditionally associated with elite art forms and usually linked to high income groups (Mandoki 2001). In this respect, the everyday practices and the manifestations of low income groups have been left stripped of any possibility of being considered 'aesthetic'. Aesthetics has also been linked with beauty, also a difficult subject:

> *[B]eauty (as truth, justice or goodness) is an effect of language and not an ontological fact [...]. It thus appears to have been existing on its own, independently from the subject... This is how beauty becomes a fetish, appearing to have powers of its own and to exist independently from the subject.* (Mandoki 2007: 7).

Whatever the uncertainties and difficulties in defining aesthetics, it can be said that 'aesthetics is related to experience as the live dimension of reality without necessarily implying any relation to beauty or pleasure' Mandoki (2007: 75). Moreover, 'aesthetic perception is primarily sensuous and affective' (Taylor 2009: 193), and as with beauty, it depends on 'norms and conventions that we can all accept' (Scruton 2009: 3). It is implied, therefore, that the experience of aesthetic effects is related to specific groups, and depends on the norms and conventions they share; in other words, their culture. 'The question about architecture [and urbanism] could now be phrased as a question about the relation between utility and expression [...] an important aspect of expression involves the understanding of culture' (Tilghman 2006: 106).

It can also be inferred that everyday practices can constitute an aesthetic, because they manifest people's enactments of their culture, and their attendant affective and symbolic relationships. Popular built environments can be seen in these terms, a product of culture with an aesthetically-based value and meaning in and for that culture. The problem arises when this expressiveness is evaluated from 'outside'; namely using traditional and professional architecture and urbanism-inspired concepts and practices. After introducing aesthetics in relation to production and consumption practices, this section examines legibility and aesthetic perception in popular settlements. This exploration then moves on to the visual dimension, and finishes with a discussion on façades as strong aesthetic components of open spaces.

Social and cultural uses of open spaces can be seen as expressions of an aesthetic in terms of everyday practices where the materiality is transformed through these practices; reciprocally, people's activities will also be influenced by the tangible aspect. This is not new: there is a similar relationship between the production and consumption of open spaces and their mutual influence within and with the built environment created, especially in popular settlements. The popular or everyday aesthetics of open spaces are about involvement in production and the experience of consumption, and the materiality resulting from that process. It can be argued, therefore, that the built environment in the *barrios* needs to be observed 'from within'; otherwise it will be meaningless, and even tasteless, as part of the literature on informal settlements has argued (see for example discussion in Klaufus 2009).

The production of informal open space, as discussed in chapter 5, offers several examples of decisions taken which affect the built environment. These decisions, which can be compared to design criteria (decisions are design criteria and vice-versa), derive from practical issues, needs and aspirations. Very much the same applies in a 'formal' design process; however, the difference is in who takes the decisions: the community in informal settlements, and professionals in formal settlements. Practical design criteria are related mainly to budget matters, which impact on, for example, the materials used, construction techniques and the building process. These among other things result in a permanent transformation of the environment, as explained earlier. Needs are related to the everyday uses to which

open spaces are put, and explain the existence of places for socialising, playing and developing economic activities. Aspirations have to do with uses as well, but also with design language; for example, the use of certain forms over others, colour preferences or specific decorative elements, as will be further discussed.

The consumption of open spaces also provides examples of built environment transformation and aesthetic decisions. Social and cultural expressions manifested in the built environment can be understood as forms of community self-appropriation and the identification of places (Garcia, Giuliani *et al*. 1999; Delgado 2002). As explained in chapter 6, celebrations, eating and drinking activities, traditional games, religion and communal and political activities are observed in *barrio* open spaces, and leave material traces on them. Celebrations typical to open spaces, for example, not only reaffirm communities' culture and express it to the outside world (Delgado 2002: 192), but also make tangible impressions on the built environment. From the permanent – such as the amphitheatre in La Andrea (for the *'olla comunitaria'* and other community activities, figure 6.4) – to the more provisional (that sometimes become permanent because they are never changed, figure 6.3) like Christmas decorations on façades in La Andrea or bunting in Aguas Claras' streets. These elements, as with many others related to social and cultural practices in open spaces, provide the observed materiality with forms, materials and colours that have a message about its underlying language and meanings.

7.4.2 Legibility and Aesthetic Perception

The previous section explored aesthetics in open spaces as related to social production and construction of place, arguing that the resulting materiality has an underlying language and meanings. This section intends to explore aesthetics in *barrio* open spaces as a perceptual dimension (Lynch 1963; Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003; Taylor 2009), aiming to examine if this concept is applicable in informal settlements and to what extent it is useful in understanding the language and meaning of open spaces. 'For a space to become meaningful and for people to develop connections to it, a number of fundamental requirements must be met. First,

it must be legible, borrowing the term from Lynch's analyses' (Carr, Francis *et al*. 1992: 187).

'Aesthetic appreciation of the urban environment is primarily visual and kinaesthetic (i.e. involving awareness of movement of all parts of the body)' (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 130). In this regard, it is implied that the perception and aesthetic quality of urban spaces go together: perception as legibility and aesthetic quality as the senses' appreciation of the space. However, it has been argued that legibility is primarily cognitive and aesthetics is primarily sensuous and affective (Taylor 2009: 193). Legibility is about the 'clarity' of a space, '... the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern' (Lynch 1963: 2-3). In other words, how it is related to 'the mental maps or images that people form of their surroundings in order to orient themselves and find their way around' (Taylor 2009: 191). Lynch identified five physical elements that help to structure people's images of urban spaces: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks (Lynch 1963: 46). Aesthetic perception for Taylor (2009: 189-190) is about finding spaces sensual, emotional, affective, pleasing or interesting; it is therefore, about our experience of the space irrespective of relative illegibility. Therefore, legibility and aesthetic receptivity can be linked, but at the same time can follow different paths, and this section examines them from the evidence found in the case studies.

When researching the five physical elements that Lynch described as making a space legible, the case studies show diverse results. Paths, as 'the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves' (Lynch 1963: 46), are mainly represented by streets. Within parks, paths are sometimes clearly demarcated, but in a number of cases they are 'invisible' to the outside observer; only the local people with their daily routines know them. A similar situation is found with reference to edges or borders, some of which are evident to the observer – like the beginning of the mountain in Aguas Claras, for example – but many others are tacit limits between of one area of the *barrio* and another. People know those borders, and sometimes as an observer you are informed of them. For example, in Danubio, Arturo (the JAC president) advised me not to go into the upper part of the *barrio*: '*It*

could be unsafe, because it 'belongs' to 'La Paz'.[40] *Barrios* are internally diverse, but similar overall; in other words, differences are observed when looking at details of streets and houses, but an impression of homogeneity dominates when looking at the *barrio* as a whole. It may have to do with the language of permanent transformation with which it is observed. However, local people distinguish between different areas within their *barrios*, and identify them as such: the upper or lower parts, as in Danubio or Nueva Argentina; the area of the bus stop or the area of '*la miscelenea'* (store) in Aguas Claras; or the area '*del tanque'* (water tank) in Los Cerezos, even though the tank was moved many years ago. Nodes, 'as strategic spots' (Lynch 1963: 46) are seen in some of the street crossings; however, people in the case studies refer to particular nodes which are meaningful to them alone, as Ontiveros and De Freitas (2006) found in the Caracas' *barrios*: the youngsters' corner, the musicians' corner, the '*maleantes*' (delinquents') corner, or simply the spot for eating ice cream, as in Los Cerezos.

Landmarks, as physical reference points, are not common: of the 57 cases studied less than half showed some type of landmark. Some of these are in the form of religious images, some are community halls, and others are elements that appear to be important, such as the post-mounted loudspeaker, a graffito or a wall with a distinctive form. However, when exploring the issue with residents, less obvious landmarks emerge, for example, the blue house of Luis Emilio in Los Cerezos, or the pink house of the JAC president in Villa Sonia, or the '*panadería de don Gustavo'* (Gustavo's bakery) in Nueva Argentina.

Based on the above discussion, it is suggested that while the *barrios* open spaces are not clearly legible to the outsider, they are bristling with meaning for the people who live in them. In the same regard it is suggested that aesthetic perception may, according to Taylor (2009), be sensual, emotional, affective, pleasing or interesting for residents, but not necessarily for visitors. It can also be implied that aesthetic perception is related to meanings, and meanings are built into the social and cultural

[40] 'La Paz' is the name of the bordering *barrio* at the upper edge of Danubio. Although this part belongs to Danubio, according to Arturo people who live there consider themselves more as belonging to 'La Paz', and sometimes people from Danubio are not welcomed. It is also somewhat ironic, as'La Paz' means peace, which is not the case here.

experience of places, which connects to the idea of the previous section: aesthetics as experience. From the evidence provided by the *barrios*, legibility and aesthetic perception can be seen as linked together, and relative to the residents. This confirms the need to explore different and alternative ways of looking to understand these living spaces.

7.4.3 Visual Dimension and Aesthetic Appreciation

When seeking aesthetic arguments regarding the *barrio* open spaces, the visual dimension emerges as a perspective worth exploring. However, this dimension is closely linked with that previously examined: 'Visual appreciation of urban environment is also a product of perception and cognition' (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 130). And furthermore, aesthetics as discussed in the literature is deeply related to psychological well-being or spatial behaviour (Nassar 1989), and directly related to attachment and appropriation, as discussed in chapter 6. Understanding the visual dimension as part of the whole consumption and aesthetic experience, this section examines some visual attributes and their significance in popular settlements' open spaces. Nassar (1989: 39) identifies four perceptual attributes of urban spaces to be aesthetically appreciated: naturalness (predominance of natural over built elements), complexity (visual richness), clarity/order (coherence, congruity, legibility), and openness (spaciousness, defined interesting vistas). In a later work (1998), he adds historical attributes, as environments that provoke favourable associations. Other authors, like Gestalt psychologists, 'have argued that aesthetic order and coherence comes from the grouping and recognition of patterns' (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 131).

More generally, Smith has argued that four components allow for aesthetic appreciation: a sense of rhyme and pattern, appreciation of rhythm, recognition of balance and sensitivity to harmonic relationships (cited in Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003). Also in relation to the visual appreciation of urban environments, the work of Cullen (1961) is relevant. He argues that 'movement and time is an important part of the visual dimension of urban design'. All of these principles have been developed

and tested in famous open spaces, such as the central square in Bologna or the Piazza di San Marco in Venice (Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003), and to a large extent these underpin what good urban design is about. From the evidence of the case studies, the next section will provide some arguments for these concepts in relation to the open spaces found in the *barrios*, aiming to discuss their relevance in elaborating the aesthetic qualities of these places.

Although the previous concepts are to a large extent subjective, some are more so than others. For example, the idea of order can vary greatly from one person to another, and may even change over time; in other words, something perceived as disorganised can become organised once the internal logic is understood. This extract from my fieldwork notes illustrate this (Danubio park, December 2008):

> *A first look at the park suggests disorder. It is not clear what the borders are, different levels of consolidation among buildings reinforcing this image; rubbish and untidiness all over the place; deterioration and abandonment of some parts complete the picture. The second look registers something different: there is something going on, people are using the place, there are some traces of appropriation – shops, terraces, windows overlooking the park. The first apparently messy image is gradually becoming something interesting: wherever you look at it, you spot something interesting, a bit unique, different. The third look, the informed one, is very interesting; disorder is not observed any more, but a different kind of order.*
>
> *The community uses and takes care of the park; however, it doesn't constrain them from making complaints. It is the place for community gatherings and events, for informal meetings with family and friends. It has been the place where many of them have played and spent a significant amount of their lives, and for many this is still the case. This place is not perfect (in their words), but they are proud of it. It is under construction, very much the same as the barrios themselves. Diversity and a potential to expand is observed, which may be interpreted as a different kind of order.*

Thus order, rhyme, rhythm, balance and harmony can differ, depending on the origin of the viewpoint expressed and the background information to the observation. Following Smith's (cited in Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003) arguments, rhyme is about similarities in elements, and at the same time is about complexity and patterns. Rhythm involves a more systematic repetition of components but also involves contrast to avoid monotony. Balance is a form of order, and also has to do with harmony; however, Smith explains that it is easier to perceive than to define. And

harmony is about the relationship between the parts and the whole; it has to do with proportions and whether one focuses on the object's interesting aspects rather than on its less appealing ones. He also suggests that these components of aesthetic appreciation require time to understand, 'as the mind organises' and makes sense of the information. This is particularly helpful, and confirms what has been said regarding order: an informed look needs to be used to appreciate the design language observed in the *barrios*. In this sense, it can be argued that rhyme is seen in the windows and doors that are similar in shapes and location within the façade, but at the same time there is a complex view of these elements in the different levels of building consolidation. Rhythm is harder to identify in terms of systematic repetition, an element that is very difficult to find in the *barrios*; the same applying to monotony. It can be argued that balance and harmony are perceptible when observing the park or the street as a whole: there is a sense that elements fit in place; that the proportions of what has been built and what has not is about right; that the different housing consolidation levels add interest to the view, as well as the elements decorating the façades; that diversity is an important aspect that attracts the attention. This is, however, my informed view, my interpretation, which may be shared with others, but is largely subjective. This confirms that the appreciation of aesthetics is about the object and the observer, the object having attributes to communicate and the observer discovering these attributes and making sense of them. This goes in line with Mandoki (2007) arguments, and also with her also the recognition of the complexity of the subject, which will be further explored in the next sections.

Another informed point of view to be taken into consideration – arguably more complete – is that of users. As with what has been discussed in the previous section about legibility, residents who use and care about these places may appreciate them better. In this regard, the historical attribute suggested by Nassar (1989) can be helpful when connecting aesthetic quality with places that provoke favourable past associations. This is the case with many *barrios* open spaces, where the history that has taken place and the everyday stories that build up around it constitute powerful associations. However, this attribute is more cognitive than physical, an idea that reinforces what has been discussed so far in terms of the close relationship between

aesthetics and experience. Naturalness and openness provide interesting ideas to be explored in the *barrios*, the former having been discussed earlier, with the conclusion that it is a controversial issue: not much green is observed, and when it is, it is not always well looked after; however, people prefer to have some green areas and trees, regarding them as beneficial for their locales. Openness in terms of spaciousness and vistas comes 'naturally' in many *barrios* because of their hillside location. This could be an added value of *barrios* open spaces, and can be an attractive element for both for the insider and outsider. Complexity, movement and time are also interesting concepts with which to explore the *barrios*, and the first of them, understood in terms of visual richness, can be particularly applicable to these places. Visual complexity is perhaps one of the characteristics most in evidence when observing the *barrios* diversity; several elements such as various consolidation stages, different materials and colours, and so on, providing a complex scene. Complexity in the *barrios* is related to movement and time, perhaps not in the way that Cullen explains; but it can be argued that these concepts help us understand the observations, and what was earlier discussed as the phenomenon of 'permanent transformation' encapsulates this idea.

The exploration of these visual aesthetic concepts has revealed some issues and confirmed some others. On the revelation side, the idea of complexity as a relevant aesthetic attribute in *barrio*s open spaces is interesting, but perhaps not in the way that was originally presented by the authors. Order – a 'different kind of order' – movement and time are also valuable concepts that can be explored in the *barrios*. The link between aesthetic quality and the experience of place seems strong, which also implies the role of perception and cognition in aesthetic appreciation. In this regard, aesthetics is socially and culturally related.

7.4.4 Facades, Open Spaces and Aesthetics

On the relationship between the visual dimension and the aesthetics of open spaces, the buildings around them play a significant role. 'The visual-aesthetic character of the urban environment derives not only from its spatial qualities, but also from the

colour, texture and detailing of its defining surfaces' (Carmona, Heath *et al.* 2003: 149). In popular settlements these borders are defined by people's homes, which in the same way as the open spaces, have been self-produced, as an extensive literature has documented. This section will look at façades as a aesthetic component of the open space, in what Carmona, Heath *et al*. (2003: 149) defines as 'urban architecture, […] mean[ing] architecture that responds and contributes [positively] to its context and to the definition of the public realm'. In contributing to this, Buchanan (cited in Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 150) argues that façades should create a sense of place, mediate between inside and outside and suggest the potential presence of people behind the walls, set up a dialogue with adjacent buildings, be composed in such a way that they hold the eye, have a sense of mass and materials, have substantial, tactile and decorative natural materials and have decoration that distracts, delights and intrigues. Most of these criteria are subject to interpretation because they involve subjective judgement. Integration, for example, involves harmonisation with surroundings, another difficult subject to define; for Cantacuzino (cited in Carmona, Heath *et al*. 2003: 156-158) it means siting (the way a building occupies its site), massing (the three-dimensional disposition of the building volume), scale, proportion and materials. Without going further, it can be argued that housing façades contribute to the open space experience, and fall within Buchanan's categories, especially in three aspects: 1) mediation between inside and outside; 2) composition; 3) decoration.

The first is about the relationship between inside and outside, which as discussed in chapter 6, reveals a close link between the privacy of the house and the publicness of the street or the park in front of it (Riaño 1993; Rojas and Guerrero 1997), making the house less private and the open space less public than in other residential areas. In this regard, the façade is the transitional component between both spaces, with the interchange mediated through windows, doors, terraces and balconies; when the house has a '*tienda'* (store), the interchange is even greater. But windows, doors and terraces are not just elements found in façades that speak of a relationship between inside and outside or objects of composition, but they also reveal human and animal interaction with the open space. As the case studies show, the activity observed around windows, doors and terraces is important, and it can be argued that it is part

of the open space and the 'design' of the façade. There is always a good chance of seeing someone on the terrace looking out at the street or the park, as in Villa Sonia for example (figure 7.8), a dog barking at the people who pass by, as in Tanque Laguna (figure 7.8) or clothes hung to dry from terraces and windows, as in Danubio (figure 7.8). For Carvajalino (2004), these 'elements' are part of the façade design of every *barrio* in Bogotá, adding life, movement and colour to the 'invisible border' (Rojas and Guerrero 1997) which divides inside and outside in the *barrios*.

Figure 7.8: Some façade elements
Top: people looking out at the park in Villa Sonia; middle: dog barking from a house terrace in Tanque Laguna and a cat observing from a house in Nueva Argentina; bottom: clothes hanging out in Danubio.

The second element is the composition of the façade itself, described by Buchanan as holding the eye and dialoguing with adjacent buildings. It has been argued by some academics that nothing much beyond survival strategies can be found in informal settlements, and owing to critical economic constraints, the architecture and urban space developed in those areas only responds to functional aspects, while 'choice, creativity and aesthetic values are beyond the possibilities of the local people' (Viviescas, Gomez *et al*. 1989: 282). This idea has been challenged throughout this thesis, and the housing façade is another example of this. In well-consolidated houses in informal settlements in Santa Marta, Colombia, Kellett (1995: 284) found that the façade is a 'controlled composition using several different elements to produce a visually coherent image which communicates in a direct and unambiguous way'.

The main characteristic of the façade can be explained in the status of permanent construction and transformation, the element of progressivity, and the sense of something never finished because there is always an opportunity to modify, adapt or alter. As described by Avendaño and Carvajalino (2000), progress on the façade grows in proportion to improvement in housing: from a façade in temporary materials, such as cardboard, wood or plastic, to a one-storey building with clay bricks without plaster or colours, to a fully plastered, painted and decorated façade on the same house with two or three storeys, which can continue to grow in height and decoration. This forms the skin of the *barrios* open spaces, contributing to the diversity and to the unfinished and open atmosphere that is observed, and it can be argued that progressivity and a sense of incompleteness are major aesthetic tools. The case studies are evidence of this (figure 7.9). It is uncertain whether informal settlements' façades correspond to Buchanan's analysis, but they certainly hold attraction and dialogue with each other, and furthermore, enrich the open space.

Figure 7.9: Façade composition themes
Diversity, progressivity and different housing-consolidation stages. The use of colour also adds special characteristics. Top left: Danubio; top right: Villa Sonia; middle left: Nueva Argentina; middle right: Aguas Claras; bottom left: Tanque Laguna; and bottom right: San Cristobal.

The third element is decoration, which is seen as an 'embellishment' (Kowaltowski 1998) or '*engalle*'[41] (Carvajalino 2004). It has been argued that it not only contributes to the façade's design but also makes it more visible, making it stand out from the rest. It may be connected with the idea of status, of demonstrating achievement, as some authors have suggested (Kowaltowski 1998; Carvajalino

[41] *Engalle* is a word increasingly used to describe *barrio* façade decoration and embellishment. It has been adopted from street parlance, and is associated with personalisation of objects (like cars) and over-decoration (as with the internal decoration of buses in Bogotá, see for example: http://artepopularenmovimiento.wordpress.com/

2004; Kellett 2009). The repertoire of ornaments includes: permanent elements such as geometrical forms drawn or plastered (especially the rhombus); bordering around doors, windows and in the separation of floors, railings around doors and windows, colours (figure 7.10); semi-permanent decorations (which may have started out as temporary but have become permanent) such as Christmas decorations, religious images and vegetation (figure 7.10); and temporary accessories such as clothes hanging out to dry and the dog barking on the terrace (figure 7.8). The '*engalle*', which is an ornamental decision made by the housing occupiers, contributes to the façade's composition and to the overall open space experience.

Figure 7.10: Decoration and embellishment practices
Top: geometrical forms, bordering and railings in Villa Sonia and La Andrea; bottom: religious images, vegetation and Christmas decorations in Nueva Argentina and La Andrea.

A part of the embellishment and *engalle* of the façade is the use of colour. It can be said that painting the façade is part of the housing consolidation process, because to leave the walls 'bare' (usually displaying the construction material of hollow clay blocks, called 'number 4') is seen as inadequate (Carvajalino 2004). The colours observed are usually bright, primary hues, which attract the eye (several examples are found in the photos of this chapter). The idea of making the façade stand out

seems to be the main motivation, and together with other details, makes the façade 'special', reinforcing the impression of showing status or demonstrating achievement, as previously discussed.

Figure 7.11: Usme Centro *barrio* (case 42)
Façades painted under the municipal programme '*Embellecimiento de Fachadas'* which was replaced later with '*Pinta Tu Barrio'*.

Arguably the idea of painting the house comes from the residents, but municipal programmes have contributed as well. The current municipal programme '*Pinta Tu Barrio'* (Paint Your *Barrio),* which replaced the previous *'Embellecimiento de Fachadas'* (Façade Embellishment) provides the JACs with enough paint for about 20-25 houses, but they can be the beneficiaries of this grant several times over. The municipality provides the paint and the brushes, but the people (through the JAC) need to commit themselves to painting their houses. The JAC can ask for particular colours (according to people's preferences) but the municipality delivers what they have available, which is usually coordinated with paint companies that sponsor the programme. In this sense, the colours observed are a compromise between choice and availability. The JAC may promote ideas for painting the houses with particular colours, or matching colours by pairs, as in La Andrea (figure 5.15), or leave each home owner to decide what to do, as in Usme Centro (figure 7.11). It can be argued

that the '*Pinta Tu Barrio*' programme to some extent influences colour decisions, and with them the design language observed. In this sense, and as also discussed in chapters 5 and 6, municipal involvement ('formally' through programmes and 'informally' through negotiation) contributes to give shape to open spaces in the *barrios*; however, the agency of the residents is the main motivator.

7.5 Design Language and Meaning

7.5.1 Language

The closing section of this chapter aims to explore the design language and meanings behind the urban planning and aesthetic practices examined in the previous sections. As discussed '[...] it would be a grave simplification of human nature to hold the view that below a certain level of income and living standards, aesthetic choice disappears or loses its meaning, to be replaced with desperation' (Madanipour 1996: 164). Furthermore, the materiality observed in the *barrios* confirms a large and rich selection of design tools which convey a range of meanings. In previous sections and throughout this thesis, language and meaning issues have been presented because they are closely related to the social production and construction of space. In this section, however, a more detailed focus on this issue will be developed, exploring the design language ideas found in *barrio* open spaces and the possible meanings associated with them. The language of open spaces, along with their production and consumption, is intrinsically connected with the people. In other words, this language is the result of people's physical and symbolic interactions with the space, and people are influenced by the meanings ascribed to this language. For explanatory purposes, language will be discussed first and meanings afterward, pointing out the relationship between the two.

In terms of design language, three themes appear to be dominant in the cases studied: permanent transformation (movement); mixture of formal elements (hybridisation); and decoration ('*engalle*'). These themes also touch on a number of others which

have been presented in the course of this thesis: diversity, complexity, order or a 'different kind of order', 'the potential to expand', a 'never-ending product' and 'fragment vs wholeness'. All converge in the social production and construction of space in the *barrios*, and can be explained by the conscious and unconscious decisions taken by the people about their own space.

Permanent transformation (movement)

For Berenstein Jacques (2001: 30) the '*favela*' (*barrio*) is a movement space, where it '[are] all spatial aesthetics of movement'; Mehrotra (2010) describes the informal city as in constant motion, its observed materiality changing constantly; Brillembourg Tamayo, Feireiss *et al*. (2005) argue that informal settlements are in a permanent state of flux, inventing and re-inventing themselves on almost a daily basis. These authors, among others, acknowledge change as the main characteristic of informal settlements. In open spaces, movement is seen in both the urban layout and the housing bordering the space: different levels of housing consolidation, colours, materials, urban furniture, paths and greenery. Most of these elements are constantly in transformation due to people's ever-changing needs and expectations, which alters the image of the place. This changing image derives from perceptions of diversity and complexity, which may be difficult for an outsider to understand but which make sense to the local user. Similarly, movement is related to order, but to a 'different kind of order'. It is an order that does not necessarily match with the order or canons of the 'world outside'; this is probably the reason why it is observed as disorder. This order is linked to knowledge (of the space), experience, memory and affection; therefore, as with perception, it makes sense to the daily user and transformer, and not necessarily to the external visitor. Lastly, movement as a design language theme is related to the idea of the potential to expand, a never-ending, ongoing process. For the community, there is always the possibility of doing something else, of transforming and improving the open space; external onlookers may also share similar ideas, though for different reasons. The former may want to transform it in line with their changing wishes and needs; the latter because they think it should rather change along the lines of their own notions and conceptions. It can be argued that movement and transformation define *barrios* open spaces,

following a logic that is mainly understood by the actors involved: the users, who are also the producers and transformers of those places.

Mixture of formal elements (hybridisation)

Another design language characteristic found commonly in the *barrio*s is a mixture of elements, objects, even design styles – that some theoreticians such as Garcia Canclini (1989) call hybridisation. Garcia Canclini (1989) argues that Latin American expressiveness uses the modern and the pre-modern, the local and the global, in a sort of cultural hybridisation. That is why, he argues, it is possible within the same house to find the latest plasma TV broadcasting channels from all over the world, alongside pictures of a the '*Indio Amazonico'* (shamanic healer) which convey local and rural images. He suggests that popular cultures, which are to be found to a large extent in popular settlements, are forms of production and expression that lie somewhere between the traditional and local, and the modern and global. Hernandez (2002), however, believes this is not hybridisation but syncretism, synthesis or *mestizaje* (crossbreeding); because it is mixes elements with no regard for the political and hegemonic underpinnings of those concepts. He argues that hybridisation carries cultural and political meanings, and is not only about the combination of elements and themes. Furthermore, he suggests that a built environment is hybrid because it emerges within a process of cultural hybridisation and it 'estrange[s] the hierarchical structures that qualify [it] as inferior' (Hernandez 2002: 85). In this regard, he prefers to use the term 'transculturation', implying a more democratic cultural exchange of peripheries and centres, and as the opposite of 'acculturation', which implies the supremacy of one of these; namely, the centre (Hernandez 2005). These ideas come readily to hand to support the arguments of this thesis, in which the form and language of *barrio* open spaces need to be seen and understood within their own context, where they have value and meaning.

Decoration (*engalle*)

The third design language tool commonly observed is the use of decoration, or '*engalle*'. Similarly with syncretism and hybridisation, *engalle* is preferred to decoration or embellishment, because it more accurately represents the meaning. *Engalle* is more than just embellishment, and is related to personalisation; however, some may see it as over-decoration. *Engalle* as personalisation works for individuals

and their houses and for the community and its open spaces: it is about how residents make the place more 'theirs' – and display it as such to others – through the use of forms, elements and colours. As with the other two design language elements, it only makes sense within its context, because when it is observed from 'outside' it may be perceived as over-decoration or 'pastiche'. By the same token, it can be argued that *engalle* is part of the architecture and landscape found in the *barrios*, and therefore an integral part of the language, challenging ideas which argue the opposite (Kowaltowski 1998). As will be discussed in the next section, the meanings behind *engalle* are about showing others what individuals or groups are, want to be or wish to be seen as, and not necessarily about function. Examples of urban furniture in parks and grilles on the fronts of houses offer an illustration of this. Benches and rubbish bins are wanted by communities in their parks, but almost without exception are subject to vandalism and their functionality thereby limited. Grills over the windows of houses are explained as due to security concerns, but at the same time doors are often left ajar and children are seen playing in front of them. As Kellett (2009) argues regarding the housefront railings he found in informal settlements in Santa Marta, Colombia, they contribute to actual security, but they also provide a sense of security, and demonstrate status and luxury.

7.5.2 Meanings

Meanings are not only behind language and aesthetic practices, but they can also be seen and constructed through the way the space is produced and consumed. In this respect some meanings can be interpreted from the tangible architecture and urban fabric observed, while others are deeply embedded in the intangible memories and daily practices of the people. This section is about the meanings behind the tangible language, form and expressiveness as discussed in the previous section; however, it must be borne in mind that this tangible materiality is deeply connected with the intangible 'realities' of people's linkages to places. For Carr, Francis *et al*. (1992: 233) the creation of meaning '... is an interactive process between space and person that evolves over time, a transactional process in which user and setting are both impacted'. In popular settlements the relationship between people and space begins from the time of the production of the place itself, and it is maintained through the

permanent transformation and consumption of it. The potential, therefore, of the deep and powerful meanings created can be inferred as higher than in other areas of the city. It can be argued that a strong relationship between people and place is about creating meanings and developing roots within the space, as explained by Carr, Francis *et al*. (1992: 239): 'Positive public [open] space meanings develop when people are able to form roots in an area, when settings become important parts of their lives'. And this is what is observed in the *barrios* – space is part of people's lives, and several actions undertaken in connection with it represent ways of making those spaces more 'theirs', both in terms of transformation and use, where language and aesthetics can be seen as tools for this 'personalisation'. In this regard, it can be inferred that the ultimate objective of the relationship between people and place is attachment and appropriation, and this is related to self- and group- identity. 'A sense of connection to aspects of place that have emotional, social and cultural significance is an important facet of both self-identity and group identity' (Stephenson 2010: 14). From this explanation it can be inferred that the language and aesthetic practices found in the *barrios* open spaces contribute to attachment and identity, and that the ultimate meaning of the architecture and urban fabric observed is related to them. It is here, therefore, that the intrinsic relationship between the production, consumption and language of open spaces in popular settlements becomes clear. With this as a framework, the next paragraphs explore the meanings associated with language and expressiveness across three categories: making connections; ordering or imposing; aspiration and personalisation.

Making connections

'People need links to the world, and some are provided by the spaces they inhabit and the activities occurring within these spaces' (Carr, Francis *et al*. 1992: 187). In chapter 6, the consumption of open spaces was also discussed in the context of linking strategies, where these connections went beyond the settlement and the city and were addressed to local or rural traditions and even simultaneous global trends. Transport and the '*tiendas de minutos'* are two explicit examples of how these connections work; the first with the city and beyond, the second not only with the city but also with the world through the internet. Similar associations can be found in the built environment, where a number of formal elements and language decisions could be interpreted as ways to make connections with the rural past (pre-modern in

words of Garcia Canclini, 1989), with the modern and urban present, and even with global consumption. Hybridisation or transculturation as a design language characteristic found in popular settlements could be explained by conscious and unconscious ideas of people in connecting and expressing these connections to their places. Elements such as loudspeakers, traditional and rural games, the need to have benches and bins which do not necessarily work properly, the festive colours of façades, other façades with grills and railings, can be interpreted as tools for connecting with the past which represents tradition, the present which is the city and consumerism, and perhaps the future in the form of aspiration. These elements also contribute to residents' building 'their' own space (attachment) and showing it to others (identity).

Ordering or imposing?

Although some elements and the language implied can be seen as connecting strategies, others, or in some cases the very same ones, can be interpreted as attempts to give order to the settlement, and to the open spaces in particular. Furthermore, ordering ideas can also be seen as connecting approaches. In whatever circumstance, ordering measures can also be interpreted as imposing ideas from the outside; in other words, following canons of order which have been constructed somewhere else. The most evident, which was presented earlier in this chapter, is the orthogonal grid layout which most of the *barrios* try to follow, even overriding the topography. Although the use of the grid comes from Colonial times, and in this respect may be used unconsciously, it may be linked to the idea of the settler to achieve respectability by following conventional layouts. But It can also be interpreted as a social order and value system that want to be imposed through rigid planning as suggested by Kellett (2009). Even diversity and complexity can be interpreted as unconscious attempts to bestow order, but following a different logic as explained earlier. Order or 'a different kind of order' can be discovered after a careful look at, and understanding of a locale, not only from a morphological and visual point of view, but also within a complex social and cultural context.

Language of aspiration or personalisation?

For Kellett (2009) the planning and language observed in the *barrios* are conscious and unconscious expressions by informal settlers to be accepted as part of the city by

appropriating other patterns from more affluent areas. Popular settlers 'aspire to create conventional, legal, fully-serviced neighbourhoods'. Furthermore, he argues that it can be interpreted as a language of aspiration 'borrowed from dominant groups to which the informal dwellers aspire: a language of order, formality and affluence' (Kellett 2009: 3-5). In this regard, permanent transformation and decoration or '*engalle*' can be explained as attempts to express people's wishes and expectations. Permanent transformation can be seen as the idea of continuous improvement, of showing to themselves and others that progress is being achieved. Similarly, '*engalle*' is a way the dweller can display through the façade his 'self-perceived status' (Carvajalino 2004), his 'imagined future' (Kellett 2009), his success so far. But this language and the aesthetics observed in the *barrios* can also be interpreted as a way for dwellers to personalise their own spaces, using elements and imaginaries from different contexts. In the case of the '*engalle',* housing façades 'competing' to stand out among others are clearly visible – figure 7.9 shows examples of this – or in terms of the open space itself, the rounded garden of 'Don' Luis in La Andrea (figure 7.6) provides a good illustration. This language of aspiration or personalisation, or both, not only expresses an observable materiality, but also helps to build attachment and place identity, and alongside them, the identity of the self and the group.

7.6 Conclusions

This last analytical chapter closed the circle on the exploration of *barrio* open spaces from the production, consumption, language and meaning perspectives. It helped to make sense of issues presented in previous chapters, making clear that the social production and construction of place in popular settlements are intrinsically linked with each other through the materiality observed and its underlying meanings. This chapter aimed to discuss the form, design language and aesthetics observed in *barrio* open spaces, and to explore their associated meanings. The exploration was guided by the third research question: what is the form and design language used in open spaces and how can it be understood and interpreted?

The discussion started out acknowledging the existence of creativity and choice in the materiality found in popular settlements, challenging those who claim that nothing more than poverty and a survival language are displayed. Theoretical and conceptual tools were then explored in order to establish a framework within which to see the design language observed, in this context vernacular settlements and everyday architecture ideas were found to be appropriate, thus confirming the literature chapter's discussion of these ideas. A common underpinning of these ideas was found in their claim of a close relationship between production, consumption, language and people, a claim that also underpins the arguments of this thesis. Having established the theoretical framework under the name of 'informal urban planning', issues surrounding the urban design of *barrio* open spaces were examined. Regarding the parks, virtually no formal typology was identified, although most of them followed an orthogonal grid that was transformed to adapt to the terrain and to other circumstances of physical terrain and use. Green and paved areas, similarly to the paths within the spaces, follow consumption patterns, and their location, size and quality vary greatly. It can also be argued they are being continuously improved. Regarding urban furniture and facilities, the main items found are recreational and sports areas and pitches, which concur with the principal use 'in theory' of parks, and confirm the reason why they are called *'la cancha del barrio*', referring to the *barrio* park. Other types of urban furniture are also found, such as rubbish bins, benches and lampposts; however, their functionality is continually being challenged and they are subject to vandalism, possibly as a way of marking territory. Open spaces are seen to be in permanent transformation, from individual and particular actions such as growing a garden in front of one's house, to collective and large interventions, such as park refurbishments with the involvement of the municipality or an external body, as explained in chapter 5.

The discussion then moved on to the aesthetics of place, exploring experience, legibility, perception, visual dimensions and appreciation as aesthetic concepts to be explored in the *barrios* open spaces. It was found that these categories exist in popular settlements but work differently. Legibility, for example: open spaces are legible to the local people who know the place, use it daily and have a close relationship with it. Aesthetics here are closely related to the experience of the place

and to the emotional and affective relationship with it. On the visual dimension, specifically regarding the façades which frame open spaces, several elements were found which enrich places. Façades 'are designed' – probably not following formal canons – but it can be argued that design ideas inform them. Two among these are highlighted, the idea of the 'living façade' and the '*engalle*'. The first considers what happens 'on the façade': open doors and people going in and out, people at windows, dogs and other pets on terraces, clothes hanging out to dry, flowers and hanging gardens, and so on; the second considers the formal elements that are added, decorated and transformed permanently and are seen in terms of personalisation. All contribute to the aesthetics of the place and the overall open space experience.

The last part of the chapter examined issues surrounding design language and meaning that can be inferred from the material presented. Regarding language, three themes appeared to be dominant: permanent transformation or movement, a mixture of formal elements or hybridisation and decoration (or '*engalle*'). These ideas give access to concepts commonly voiced in the literature on the subject, such as diversity, complexity, incompleteness, and others that maybe less common, such as order or a different kind of order, a never-ending product and the fragment versus wholeness. Regarding meanings, the main argument is that they are constructed from the spaces' earliest beginnings, reinforced by their consumption and finally materialised in language and aesthetics. Meanings behind language and aesthetics, it is suggested, are to be found under three themes: making connections, ordering or imposing, and aspiration and personalisation. In the end, the meanings inferred from the materiality observed correspond to a large extent to social production and construction practices; and it can be argued that they follow on from a close relationship between people and place as expressed in attachment and identity. The following and final chapter develops the discussion on the production and consumption of open spaces in popular settlements; and on the design language inferred and the meanings that it may convey. Conceptual issues raised earlier in this thesis and a number of new theoretical inputs will be used to link the topics together, in particular presenting concluding thoughts on the research questions and through the further discussion of themes introduced in the course of chapters 5, 6 and 7.

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored the relationship between people and open spaces in popular settlements in Bogotá from production, consumption, design language and meaning perspectives. It has aimed to contribute to the debate for a different understanding of popular settlements, beyond marginalisation and poverty discourses. In this regard, and aligned with 'new' literature on informality, this study argues that popular settlements can be seen as an alternative approach to urban space production, despite their undeniable limitations. It has also documented and discussed the significance of open spaces in the *barrios* not only for urban purposes, but also for social and cultural building processes. By doing so, it has contributed to the understanding of those spaces, which, compared to housing, have not achieved the same level of awareness. Open spaces in popular settlements have traditionally been seen as spare, unused areas, with little value; possibly the reason why relatively little research has been undertaken. However, this thesis has found that there is much happening in those urban spaces, and that together with their housing stock, they form a constituent part of the settlements in terms of built environment and social relationships.

This chapter presents a conclusion to the thesis, returning to the themes and questions outlined in the introduction and the discussions presented in the preceding chapters. However, it does not attempt to summarise all the findings and conclusions of each chapter, but to draw together the various interlinked issues, reflecting on the literature and the empirical evidence. Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to discuss further the themes of this thesis and put forward subjects for debate and further research. After this introduction, the chapter recapitulates the main themes of this research: popular settlements, open space and the people-place relationship. The third section reflects on the three research questions which have governed this study, linking back to theory and framing the empirical data. The fourth part proposes three themes for debate which link together the various discussions of this thesis: first, the existence of a 'popular' architecture and urban language; second, the construction of meaning through production, consumption and design language; and third, open

spaces in the *barrios* as a search for attachment and identity. The fifth section explores the implications in terms of policy and architectural education and practice. This section also identifies possible areas of future research and further development. The chapter concludes with thoughts on the research themes, and also on how the research was accomplished.

8.2 Back to the Research Themes

8.2.1 Popular Settlements

Popular settlements have been at the centre of interest in this research. Although they have been extensively studied, there is still room for improving our understanding and exploring their role within the city and society. This research has confirmed that popular settlements play an important role in Bogotá, and to a certain extent in the majority of Latin American cities. They play a significant role not only for their size, but especially for what happens in those areas. The evidence found in this research confirms this; *barrios* are full of activities: people in the streets and parks are found playing, chatting to each other, buying things in the '*tiendas*', building social relations and transforming space constantly to accommodate these interactions. Popular settlements are not only large parts of cities continuously growing and changing, but also places with strong relations with people, and people with strong relations with places.

The thesis has confirmed the richness and the creativity found in popular settlements, in line with what can be called the 'new literature' on informal settlements that has been discussed throughout the study. However there is still a need to go beyond binary constructions of formal/informal and legal/illegal, which are very much alive in policy and practice, in which these areas are considered as solely marginal and problematic.

> *Urban informal settlements are conceptualised in certain marginalising ways by influential discourses. This can contribute to their isolation, theoretically and materially, in conceptual terms and in the cities where they develop.* (Lombard 2009: 295)

What Lombard found in the *Colonias Populares* in Mexico, I have found in the *barrios* of Bogotá: they are ordinary places with ordinary people living their everyday lives, going in search of their dreams and looking for a better future – just like everybody everywhere. There are special characteristics, both urban and social, and severe limitations and inequalities that cannot be ignored, but popular settlements are just part of the city – or perhaps as Brillembourg Tamayo, Feireiss *et al*. (2005) argue, they *are* the city. Paraphrasing Robinson (2006), they are ordinary places and should not be labelled anything different, such as marginal or illegal, because as Lombard (2009) points out this can contribute to their real marginalisation, and also because it is not what is found in the field. This research aims to contribute to the debate on popular settlements, arguing that they are a consistent part of cities in Latin America, parts which display an alternative mode of production of urban space and with strong people-place interactions.

8.2.2 Open Spaces in Popular Settlements

Open spaces in popular settlements have been the research subject of this study. Literature on popular or informal settlements has been focused especially on housing issues; however, on open or public spaces exploration has been limited. Among the causes for this apparent lack of interest is the belief that open spaces do not actually exist in these settlements – just spare areas with little value both for the people and for the urban setting. This research has challenged those beliefs: open spaces exist beyond the context of mere spare areas, active involvement in their production and consumption is observed, and they are clearly important to the people.

The open spaces of popular settlements do not fall easily into the types and classifications found in literature. However, it is also the case that open, public,

urban, outdoor space (among the commonest definitions) is not a static concept, and neither is it simple to define. There may be as many definitions as open spaces themselves, as each space has distinctive characteristics. This was what I found in this research: open spaces in the *barrios* are at the same time ordinary and unique. They are ordinary spaces in ordinary settlements, and everyday spaces which '[u]nrestricted by the dictates of the built form, they become venues for the expression of new meanings through the individuals and groups who appropriate the spaces for their own purposes' (Crawford 1999: 28/29). But, as a consequence they are also 'special'. Their production processes, similar to housing in popular settlements, are largely decided, managed and even in many cases built by the people as well. Their uses are heavily oriented towards recreation and sports, and purely contemplative activities are rarely included. They are also closely related to productive activities: the '*tienda*' in front of the park or the street where beer is bought, the street vendor of '*arepa*' and '*empanadas*' or the ice cream trolley are part of these spaces. These and others discussed throughout the thesis are social building activities which contribute to making these ordinary places 'special'. Lastly, but equally important, is the materiality observed, arguably with a direct connection to production and consumption practices.

This confirms the idea that these spaces do not easily fall into any of the 'established' classifications found in the associated literature. As discussed in the introduction to the thesis, it was necessary to find a name with which to refer to them, and by doing so start searching for their theoretical characterisation. 'Public space' was supposedly the 'normal' way of calling them, which is usually how they are referred to in literature; however, it was explained that they are not entirely public in terms of accessibility and use. Communal open spaces may be more accurate in that respect, but again, they are not entirely communal, because they are not communally owned, for example. The term used in this research – open spaces – avoided these misunderstandings; however, a full characterisation is needed. Among these characteristics – and a very significant one – is the close relationship with the users, who are to a large extent the producers of these spaces as well.

8.2.3 People-Place Relationships

This research has explored the relationship between people and place in open spaces of popular settlements. This relationship was outlined at the beginning of the thesis as an important one, and the development of the study confirmed this. In more affluent parts of the city, people normally relate to their environment only through using it, because others have produced the space for them. The form and design language observed is what the professionals have decided; in the best cases, interpreting people's needs and expectations, but also following the dynamics and tendencies of the profession. Arguably, the relationship between people and place tends to be weak. In popular settlements the logic is different, people not only relate to the built environment by using it, but also by producing and giving form to it. The form and design language observed correspond to a large extent to what people have decided, following also the dynamics and possibilities of individuals and communities. There is a 'long term' relationship between people and place, popular settlers being deeply involved in the creation of their own places, which in several cases includes contestation and conflict as well, and the relationship gets deeper with everyday use. This relationship, therefore, tends to be close and goes both ways: places are transformed by social actions, and social practices are transformed by their interaction with places, as Holloway and Hubbard (2001) suggest.

This thesis has argued that open spaces in popular settlements are the result of social production and construction practices, and the form and design language observed is the consequence of these practices. In this regard, meanings are built throughout the entire process. Open spaces in the *barrios* are not spare areas with little value; on the contrary, they hold functional and symbolic uses from the early stages of the settlement. Open spaces are a social product, 'created out of the demands of everyday use and the social struggles of urban inhabitants' (Crawford 1999: 7). These spaces are socially produced and transformed by 'the actions of subjects both individual and collective who are born and die, who suffer and who act' (Lefebvre 1991: 3). The transformation of those spaces continues with the social construction of them 'through people's social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting' (Low 1996: 861-862). The product is arguably the result of social

production and construction practices, as Harvey (1996) suggests. As Rapoport (1988: 58) claimed in the same context: '[popular settlers] generally attempt to create settings and elements that support components of culture'. Similarly Carr, Francis *et al* (1992), who explained that open spaces are a mirror of social values, and represent physical, social, political and economic realities. Open spaces are constituent parts of popular settlements; they are socially produced and constructed by means of everyday interactions. The materiality observed is arguably the result of these interactions and the meanings are also built and transformed along the way.

8.3 Reflecting on the Research Questions

8.3.1 How is open space designed, built, managed, transformed and sustained?

This question guided the exploration of the production process of open spaces in the *barrios* and their role in spatial and social dynamics. It aimed at investigating the developmental process and the actors involved and roles played. Two main conclusions appear significant: the first is the confirmation that – similar to housing – open space is largely produced by the people themselves, by the users. The second is that open spaces also follow similar housing production patterns. The developmental process is guided by a 'common idea' or vision that most of the residents share of what their park should be. However, it does not follow a fixed timetable; it is constructed gradually over months and years, according to economic possibilities and the opportunities of obtaining external resources and getting other actors involved. The process, based on practical concerns, is directed by people's needs and expectations, which are on the move as well. As with housing, open spaces follow a 'progressive development' idea, a constant upgrading, in which there is always a chance to improve, making the materiality a 'never ending' product. The main actors involved in the process are the local people, either organised in

communities or following individual initiatives. They design, build, manage and maintain the open spaces. Other actors include the municipality, NGOs and social organisations. In some cases their role is crucial in respect to resources, advice or expertise. The municipality runs collaborative programmes which work with communities to improve their own open spaces, and some of them such as OSP or OPC have contributed greatly to popular settlement development. NGOs and social organisations contribute to organising communities and channelling resources.

The role of open spaces in the *barrio* is significant since the early stages, and location of streets and parks and eventual facilities in them are themes the informal settler has in mind when first moving to the settlement. However, the actual improvement of such areas comes after public services have been arranged and houses have been initially settled. The spatial and social roles of open spaces in the *barrios* – discussed throughout the thesis – are closely linked to each other, and gradually grow with its production, transformation and consumption. They are also strongly tied to the materiality observed and to the meanings built in the course of the production and consumption processes.

The concepts of social production of space and everyday life of Lefebvre and De Certeau cast light on this exploration. Understanding the city as a social product with historic, cultural and political dimensions was important for this research. The belief that this social production of space is undertaken through everyday actions of common people, and that these actions and people are important, were crucial to understanding the open spaces of the *barrios* and their role in the daily lives of the locals, as well as the built environment. Lefebvre argued that apparently trivial everyday actions are important to social experience and in the political arena. He described daily life as the 'screen on which society projects its light and its shadow, its hollows and its plans, its power and its weakness' (Lefebvre 1991: 18). De Certeau invited us to see the city 'from below', where every day practices 'bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical and make-shift creativity groups or individual already caught in the nets of the "discipline"'(De Certeau 1984: XIV,XV). Popular settlements are places where people organise their own environments and their own lives 'from below', with little help from the 'outside' or

from the ‘discipline’. By doing so, they socially produce their spaces and construct themselves socially, culturally and politically. The product observed is built from everyday practices. The study of this product, the social process behind it, and the meanings constructed along the way, have been the aim of this research: to contribute to the understanding of these places and the voices that see in them an alternative way of building city and community in Latin America.

Other concepts have also been useful in orienting this question and the research, continuing the theoretical approach explained in the previous paragraph. The ideas of ‘ordinary places’ of Robinson (2006), ‘place making’ of Schneekloth and Shibley (1995), and ‘everyday urbanism’ of Crawford (1999) illuminated the way and helped to make connections. Going beyond binary discourses of formal/informal, legal/illegal and exclusively poverty-related issues, which is how traditionally popular settlements have been seen, and seeing them as ‘ordinary places’ helped towards a better understanding of them. Place-making seen as the spatial and social actions carried out by the residents to transform spaces into places to live, and in this process construct places and meanings proved also to be significant in understanding the themes of this research and the production of space. Lastly, ideas of everyday urbanism were useful for connecting open spaces to everyday practices that socially produce those spaces. ‘Everyday urbanism seeks to release the powers or creativity and imagination already present within daily life as the means of transforming urban experience and the city’ (Crawford 1999: 11).

8.3.2 What is the relationship between open spaces and the people (users) who create them?

Although the people-open space relationship starts with the production of place, this enquiry aimed to investigate whether this relationship is maintained and enhanced by the consumption of place. In this regard, one of the initial conclusions of this research was that the production and consumption of open space in the *barrios* are part of the same process. Open spaces are permanently and constantly produced,

consumed and transformed by the people. On the consumption of open spaces, several activities were found, some purely functional and others more experiential and symbolic. In addition functional, social and culturally-related activities were found. These are closely related to the nature of the residents' social and cultural context and to the expression of their needs and expectations. In this regard and confirming what has been argued earlier, open spaces are closer to the communal than to the public. Arguably the main social building activities carried out in *barrio* open spaces are playing and engaging in sports. As examined in chapter 6, age-ranges here go from infancy when playing in the street in front of the house through teenage and young adulthood when the football match in the *barrio 'cancha'* is part of common activities, and on to adulthood and old age with the playing of '*tejo*' and drinking. Playing and engaging in sport are not just means of exercise, but are social building activities developed in open spaces. Culturally-related uses of open spaces are also important, and chapter 6 examined them, concluding that many are linked to residents' provincial origins and traditional beliefs.

Commercial activities are also found to be very significant in the *barrios*. There is a relatively large range of commercial outlets closely related, both physically and in terms of use, to open spaces. The '*tienda*' is perhaps the most visible and important one; it not only fulfils a commercial role, but a community linking and social building duty, too, as discussed by Coen, Ross *et al*. (2008). The '*tienda*' expands its activity into the open space, which in turn usually projects part of its dynamics into the '*tienda*', beer-drinking and chatting being perhaps the best examples. The '*tiendas de minutos*', the street vendors, the ice cream trolleys, the food stalls on the streets are also part of this commercial activity that give open spaces in the *barrios* a special character, apart from being productive and social bonding activities. Among more experiential and symbolic aspects of consumption, territorial appropriation, place attachment and identity indicators were found. Explicit cultural expressions associated with the open spaces such as music, food and drink, or religious and political demonstrations, can be seen as place attachment activities. The same applies to teenage groups wanting to influence or 'control' some particular areas, which can be seen as territorial appropriation strategies, and which can also generate levels of conflict. Identity might be argued as a consequence of the whole range of production and consumption practices. It can be observed in the tangible materiality, which is

very distinctive, but also in people's references to their streets and parks, which they care for and defend.

Most of the concepts and authors identified in the previous section were also significant here in inspiring the search that this question posed. Open spaces in popular settlements are not only socially produced, but socially constructed and transformed. The ideas of everyday life of Lefebvre and De Certeau become even more appropriate in understanding the consumption and transformation of open spaces in the *barrios*, which on a daily basis and with ordinary actions, people not only transform but give meaning to them. In the same regard, the concept of place–making helped to explain how people construct their spaces spatially, socially and culturally, with 'the construction of a location (physical place) and locale (material setting for social activities), which is also a meaningful place for residents (Lombard 2009: 302). It is then possible to confirm what Madanipour argued, referring to the need to see urban spaces as spatial, social and symbolic identities within cities: 'It is only in a fragmented, static concept of space that we see social processes as separate from the physical and mental space [...] They are by definition the component parts of a more comprehensive conception of space' (Madanipour 1996: 30).

8.3.3 What is the form and design language used and how can it be understood and interpreted?

This question directed the research into the physical materiality observed in open spaces. It started from the discussions arising from the previous research questions around the issue that if open spaces in popular settlements are largely produced, transformed and consumed by the users themselves, the product is closely linked to the people. The question also arose from the acknowledgement that richness and creativity is found in popular settlements beyond poverty and survival responses, confirming the existence of certain aesthetics and design language. This question was about how to understand and interpret this language, and to explore the meanings behind it, which are also a consequence of production and consumption

processes. One of the first conclusions is that virtually no shared urban typologies are found in open spaces. Nearly all the *barrio* parks are different, although most of them contain one or more sports fields. Streets are also significantly different: some have stairs, some have pavements, some have some type of urban furniture, some have green areas, and so on. This relates very much with their use, confirming the close relationship between consumption and the actual configuration of the space. Also, this acknowledges the existence of at least two design language themes that recur throughout the analysis: diversity and permanent transformation. Experience, legibility, perception, visual dimension and appreciation were also explored as aesthetic concepts. For example, open spaces are legible to the residents who know and use the space every day, but it can be difficult for an outside onlooker who needs first 'to understand' the place. Landmarks do not consist of statues or obelisks, they are the '*tienda'* of '*Don Jose'*, the corner where young women gather, and so on. Aesthetics are closely related to the experience of the place and to the emotional and affective relationship with it. On the design language found in urban architecture, three themes are constant: permanent transformation or movement, the mixture of formal elements or hybridisation and decoration or '*engalle*'. They are related to concepts of diversity, complexity, potential to expand, order (a different kind of order) and fragment vs wholeness. On meanings, three themes are suggested to largely encompass the production, consumption and design language: making connections, ordering or imposing, and aspiration and personalisation, which in the end confirm the validity of searching for a close relationship between people and place expressed in attachment and identity.

In theoretical terms the arguments continue to be built upon the ideas of social production and construction of space and the close relationship between them (Low 1996), and with the product (Harvey 1996). Culture is identified as the link between production and consumption and the built environment, as Rapoport (1988) suggests in relation to the built form in informal settlements which supports components of culture. More generally, Kellett (1995: 52) argues that: 'people in all societies are attempting to shape their environment to correspond and support their lifestyle (i.e. culture)'. Within these ideas, two sets of concepts were found and used to explore the design language of open spaces in the *barrios*: vernacular settlements and

everyday architecture. These ideas, to a large extent complementary, illuminated the research into the architecture and urbanism found in the open spaces. Among other authors, Oliver's and Rapoport's ideas were important in understanding vernacular architecture, and Kellett and Napier (1995) in seeing informal settlements as possible examples of vernacular settlements, with an architecture that goes beyond exclusive associations with poverty and constraint. Drawing on the work of Miles (2000) and Crawford (1995; 1999) everyday architecture and urbanism was explored, their ideas being found not only to fit well with Lefebvre's and De Certeau's arguments for everyday life (they actually come from there), but also to provide interesting insights which helped with the 'reading' of the empirical data. Among other theories and authors that were significant for this research question, Mandoki (2001; 2007) and Carvajalino (2004) from Mexico and Colombia respectively, contributed with context-related ideas of popular aesthetics and '*engalle*' (over-decoration) as design language themes in popular settlements.

8.4 Themes for Debate

8.4.1 Popular Architecture

These so-called 'themes for debate' aim to elaborate further some of the findings of this research, identifying significant subjects for discussion. As implied in the heading, these are ideas and proposals arising from the findings that need to be developed with academic debate and further research. The first of these themes is the claim for the existence of a 'popular architecture', referring to the forms, design language and aesthetics found in popular settlements. On the one hand, literature has acknowledged the existence of choice, creativity and richness in the materiality observed in popular settlements (Kellett and Napier 1995; Klaufus 2000; Brillembourg Tamayo, Feireiss *et al.* 2005; Fiori and Brandao 2010). On the other hand, popular settlements in Latin America represent a consistent part of cities; thus in Bogotá more than half the city has grown from informal patterns, or in Caracas

where 55% of the population live in *barrios* (Brillembourg and Klumpner 2010: 119). It can be implied, therefore, that there is a vast amount of the built environment in Latin America that has not been properly studied. Kellett and Napier (1995: 10) ask: 'Why has there been so little interest in studying the forms of spontaneous [popular] settlements, especially when informal processes have become the predominant housing production method in many Third World [developing world or global south] cities?' Hernandez (2005: X) puts it in this way and offers an answer:

> *It is clear that there is a lack of scholarship – and therefore of literature – on the architectures produced by minority groups in spontaneous settlements such as the 'favelas' or 'invasiones' that have developed in most Latin American cities. These architectures have been radically dismissed for not complying with hegemonic architectural narratives and, consequently, for disrupting the homogeneous growth of cities as imagined by architects. The paradox lies in the fact that the buildings produced by minority groups represent an average 70% of the fabric of Latin American cities.*

The reasons that lie behind these architectures have been overlooked, and the claim is for the existence of an architecture in popular settlements, a 'valid architectural expression which can undeniably exist' (Kellett and Napier 1995: 22).

How can popular architecture be defined? And, for that matter, can it be called architecture? Tilghman (2006) quoted how Sir Henry Wotton in the book Elements of Architecture, adapted from Vitruvius, claimed the three conditions of a good building to be commodity, firmness and delight. Commodity as fulfilling the human activities which it was created for; firmness as to technical and mechanical issues for ensuring its function and stability; and delight through its beauty. Tilghman discusses beauty throughout his paper, concluding that it 'was augmented and replaced in aesthetic theory by the concept of expression', and 'expression involves the understanding of culture' (2006: 106). This is one of the key claims of the built environment found in the *barrios*; that it has a close relationship with the people, because they have largely produced and consumed those spaces.

This research has suggested three design language themes that may help to explain this architecture. The first one is hybridization (Garcia Canclini 1989) or

transculturation (Hernandez 2005) as the use of different design elements corresponding to different styles, a vocabulary taken from different geographical, temporal and social contexts and used to produce something new. Hernandez (2002) argues that it is more than a combination of numerous architectural motifs, because it may imply that it is a copy of something believed to be superior, and therefore the new production is identified as inferior. He suggests instead of hybridization, transculturation, as a real 'process of cultural exchange', in which what is produced is not an inferior copy but a new language proposal with social and political concerns involved (Hernandez 2005). The second theme is permanent transformation, which implies diversity, potential to expand, fragment and rhizomatic growth (Berenstein Jacques 2001) and a 'permanent state of flux' (Brillembourg Tamayo, Feireiss *et al*. 2005). The third theme has been argued in this thesis as '*engalle*' (Carvajalino 2004), which can be described as 'the more the better'; with a strong relationship with popular expressiveness and an aspirational language.

Although still controversial, the existence of an architecture of popular settlements has been confirmed in the literature and by the empirical data, and the impact has been acknowledged: 'popular or informal architectures are as much representative examples of the dynamic realities of Latin American cities' (Hernandez 2005: XXII). However, there is still much room to explore as to how this architecture can be explained and understood, to which this research has aimed to contribute.

8.4.2 The Construction of Meaning through Production, Consumption and Language

This section aims further to discuss the meanings associated with the production, consumption and design language of open spaces in popular settlements. Open spaces can be seen as a direct consequence of social production and consumption practices; in other words, open spaces in the *barrios* exhibit to a large extent the needs, expectations and dreams of the residents. This also means that these spaces suggest a number of meanings that the people have built along the way. Therefore,

these meanings may be inferred from the social practices and architecture observed. 'We cannot examine social systems and beliefs separately from the spatial and material context of which they are part' (Kellett 2008: 55). The converse can be argued, in that it is not possible to understand the material context without exploring social practices. This is even more important in popular settlements, where the relationship between people and place is strong, where the built environment is largely the product of social practices, and social practices are transformed by the settings in which they are developed. Meanings are at the centre of this relationship, and they can be found either in the materiality or in the social practices, and more likely in the complement of both. The creation of meaning 'is an interactive process between space and person that evolves over time, a transactional process in which user and setting are both impacted' (Carr, Francis *et al*. 1992: 233). In popular settlements, different from other areas of the city, the transactional processes are twofold: the production of the place and the processes of consumption. It can be inferred therefore, that the meanings created tend to be deep, which connects again with the idea of the strong relationship between people and place in popular settlements.

Kellett (2009) suggests that meanings behind the materiality observed in popular settlements are about aspiration, an imagined future where the future dimension is crucial, challenging common thoughts that popular settlers are only present-time focussed. Elaborating on these ideas and making inferences from the data of this research, it comes to mind that meanings are about looking for connections. 'People need links to the world, and some are provided by the spaces they inhabit and the activities occurring within these spaces' (Carr, Francis *et al*. 1992: 187). Making connections not only with an imagined future, but with a rural past, with a distant provincial area, with a tradition of indigenous origin, and so on. Several of the social activities developed in the open spaces of the *barrios* refer to those connections; for example, the food, the games, the music, the religious manifestations, their settings being gradually transformed to accommodate them. Connections can also be understood as a search for integration, with others and with the place, to be recognised both individually and as a community. 'A sense of connection to aspects of place that have emotional, social and cultural significance is an important facet of

both self-identity and group identity' (Stephenson 2010: 14). Attachment and identity are suggested to be possibly the main outcomes of the look for connections to the place and to the others.

Other meanings explored are about ordering or imposing and personalisation or status. These are not entirely new meanings and may be read as extensions of those of aspiration and connection. Order is an interesting concept which differs depending on who establishes it or what circumstances are in place beforehand. Chapter 7 discussed the order existing in the open spaces which had to be read from within and not from outside. If it is read from the outside, it is considered to be disorder, which opens up another interpretation: imposition. Hernandez and Kellett (2010) argue that some physical actions in *barrios* relate to the imposition of an ideal social order. The best example is the orthogonal planning grid that in many cases overrides realities on the ground, and which is the common layout of most *barrios.* Personalisation or showing economic status can be directly connected to aspiration: showing others that one is achieving economic success. '*Engalle*' is a way to show this status, which also suggests an idea of defining difference from others, of standing out from the crowd.

Meanings are not static; they are created and transformed in step with changes in social practices and built environment in the *barrios*; i.e. with the actions of everyday life. As with popular architecture, exploring meanings in connection with architecture and social practices in popular settlements is a fruitful arena for further research.

8.4.3 *Barrio* Open Spaces: Attachment and Identity Building

This thesis has explored the close inter-relationship between the production and consumption of open spaces in popular settlements and residents, along with the materiality produced that is arguably the result of this relationship. The exploration of the design language used and the meanings associated with that language and with the social production and construction process in general, may confirm the existence

of this strong open space-popular settler relationship. The main common feature found both in the design language and the meanings was the idea of connection. Connection through an aspirational language with tools of transculturation, permanent transformation and '*engalle*', in addition to implicit and explicit connective meanings with roots in past, present, and future; in other words, the drive to find a place within the city and the society. This last discussion section proposes the idea of attachment and building self and group identity as the ultimate meaning of open spaces in popular settlements; and by doing so, confirm once more the contribution of popular settlements as a valid alternative way of building city and community.

The relationship between people and place can contribute to building individual and group identities through the interactions that allows people to be described in terms of belonging to a specific place (Proshansky, Fabian *et al*. 1983). In this regard, the feeling of belonging to a place is fuelled by attachment to the place: if there is no strong connection to the place there is less contribution by the place to people's identities. 'Attachment to specific places contributes to the development and preservation of individuals' identity and its disruption can cause a sense of loss leading to negative effects for the community' (Mazzoni and Cicognani 2008: abstract). Similarly place attachment can be described as 'an affective bond that people establish with specific areas where they prefer to remain and where they are comfortable and safe' (Hernandez and Hidalgo 2008: abstract). Therefore it can be argued that attachment and identity are closely linked together. It can also be inferred that the more people are attached to their places, the deeper the social relationships they can build, and possibly the better they can feel about themselves and others. This claim requires more thought and research than is within the scope of this study; however, it is possible to argue within the boundaries of this research that both people and place are transformed by their interaction, and that popular settlements are a valid alternative way to build community.

There are a number of concepts and practices found in the literature linked to attachment and identity; among them appropriation, place identity and sense of community are perhaps the most useful for the arguments of this research. Jimenez

Dominguez (2007: 99) suggests that 'appropriation is different from other practices like simple possession, for it involves collective activity… Appropriation has an affective dimension which turns this relation into identification'. Harner (2001: 660) describes place identity as 'a cultural value shared by the community, a collective understanding about social identity intertwined with place meaning'. A sense of community is defined by Garcia, Giuliani *et al*. (1999: 730-731) as a collective bond between people and place which involves membership relations consisting of a feeling of belonging to a group. It includes properties in which 'members influence the community and, at the same time, the community influences them', reinforcing integration, need satisfaction, and emotional connections. Appropriation, place identity and sense of community are found in the open spaces of the *barrios*, as discussed in the course of this thesis, they are explicit in some of the evidence presented and may be inferred in other parts. Possibly the most explicit is appropriation, both as individual and collective activities. Popular settlers appropriate their spaces physically and symbolically, the first with observable open space transformations, and the second through a sense of attachment and perceived identity. Issues of design language, for example '*engalle*', may confirm this: people take possession of 'their own' and show it to others in a consistent and particular way. Place identity and sense of community are perhaps less explicit, but they are also observed. There are implicit collective understandings of community values and membership that are projected both in the built environment and in social practices. The sense of 'ownership' of a park or a street by those who live nearby; the sense of belonging to a certain *barrio* and not to another; the strategies that neighbours put into place to defend their open spaces and the settlement against intruders; all are examples of collective actions and meanings that are attached to place.

Attachment and identity can be summarised as the search for a place within the city and society. The design language and the inferred meanings found in open spaces of popular settlements make explicit this search. Aspiration as a language and the search for connections as a meaning may be seen as the implicit and explicit strategies popular settlers display in their built environment and their social practices.

8.5 Findings Implications and Future Research

8.5.1 Significance of Findings for Policy and Architectural and Planning Education

This research has aimed to contribute to the understanding of popular settlements as an alternative mode of production of space, to enhance the limited knowledge about open spaces in the *barrios,* and to discuss the relationship between popular settlers and their open spaces. The study has been focussed on contributing to the academic debate on those themes; however, it may also have implications for policy and architectural and planning education. These implications may be summarised in Healey's (2005: 5-6) statement:

> *Places are as much social nodes as physical sites, evident in the meanings given to them as much in the interactions which take place within them... Where do planners start in considering our core focus of 'people and place' relations?*

This is not the argument for a romanticised view of people's experiences, rather it is an argument for taking them more seriously both for policy and for teaching issues. In Colombia policy is largely oriented towards quantitative data and objectives: housing and urban space deficits, the number of houses and parks that should be built in a certain period of time, and so in; but little is said on the quality of these solutions and the users' needs and expectations. Architecture Schools (urban planning and design in Colombia is studied within architecture) also show a considerable lack of interest in popular settlements and people-place studies. They are more interested in the affluent areas of cities – even though they are, if not minor at least no more than equal in size compared to the *barrios* – and in pure design and technology issues rather than in the relationship of those subjects to the users.

In terms of policy, the main contribution of this research is to inform, to help raise awareness of the potentials of popular settlements in building city and society, but without omitting the urgent need for more governmental attention and resources. In this regard, this study can also contribute to changing governmental and to some

extent academic, attitudes towards popular settlements, which are generally seen as problematic, marginal and illegal. This research can also contribute to policy by explaining what popular open spaces are, how they are produced, used and what they mean to people, thus addressing the current lack of understanding and drawing more attention to these urban areas. Lastly, this thesis joins forces with several studies which argue for more people-centred policies, especially with reference to the built environment, where people should be the leading actors and urban and housing issues the supporting characters. For architectural and planning training issues, this research may contribute to draw attention to popular settlements as a subject of study. Young professionals may benefit from knowing more about these areas and the people who live in them, which could lead to a better understanding of the city and their own roles as architects and planners.

8.5.2 Limitations of the Study and Areas for Future Research

Limitations of the study are seen as opportunities for further research. There were themes and directions that this research did not explore because of the focus on the objectives and research questions as originally designed. The main perspective this thesis aimed to explore was about people's involvement in the transformation of their own environments, in other words, a bottom-up approach. Although the roles and dialectics with other actors were discussed, this was not explored deeper and it could be a fruitful arena for further inquiry. Possibly the principal recommendation for future research is about open and public spaces. 'Research on public spaces in Mexico, and in general in Latin America is scarce' (Hernandez Bonilla 2004: 333), and Colombia is no exception. Even more necessary is research into open spaces in popular settlements, where there is little understanding of what these spaces are, how they work, their role within the urban structure and the social relations of the *barrio*, and so on. Traditionally, studies on popular settlements have focussed on housing issues, overlooking the significance of open spaces for the popular settlers involved. Along the same lines, studies focussing on the relationship between people and urban spaces are suggested, in the belief that such studies can give further understanding on how the city works in relation to its users, rather than in relation to design and economic urban theories which are frequently researched. More

qualitative research is required to give room for residents' voices, which are commonly omitted in urban studies, especially in those referring to popular settlements. This methodological approach could also help to balance the quantitatively-centred data on which Colombian urban and public space polices are largely based. All of these could enhance our understanding of popular settlements and could contribute to building theory based on cities in the global South beyond purely developmentalist approaches, as Robinson (2006) suggests.

On more specific suggestions for further research, section 8.4 'themes for debate' has outlined some possible lines of enquiry. The first of those is regarding the study of what can be called 'popular architecture'. As has been argued, the existence of a design language beyond poverty and constraint in popular settlements has been confirmed. It has also been clarified that the materiality observed in the *barrios* corresponds to functional and symbolic relationships with the users. And literature has explained how these settlements, and therefore their architectures, represent more than 50% of the fabric of Latin American cities. All of this supports the need to know more about this architecture, which is still a controversial topic with limited study. The second of the suggested areas for future research is place-meaning in popular settlements. Limited research has been done into what *barrio* urban spaces mean to residents, how these meanings are constructed, and the role of production and consumption practices in them. The last suggested theme is on attachment and identity building in popular settlements, which can be read as an extension of the previous research topic. It is about the experiential construction of places and its significance to collective social relationships and the individual's position within the community and in society at large. In summary, these suggested themes complement the ones presented in the previous paragraph and advocate more research on popular settlements and for building urban and architectural theory from the global South.

8.6 Concluding Thoughts

This thesis finishes as it started, with some personal comments; however, this time the comments are on what has been done and what has been learned. This study was motivated by a personal interest to know more about popular settlements, finding a

framework for this interest in the literature and in the complexities of Latin American cities where these settlements form the major part of the urban fabric. Since then, an interesting and challenging journey has commenced, having in open spaces the standpoint from which to explore these settlements. This proved to be a good decision, not only because of the limited research that has been carried out on open spaces, but also for the sake of the interesting findings in terms of production, consumption, design language and meaning of those places. Along the way, another decision had to be taken, that of which theoretical and methodological tools to use to carry out the exploration of open spaces, finding in people-place ideas a fruitful source of light and inspiration. With everything in place, the 'real' research started: my encounter with the people, exploring 'together' with them the themes of my research.

In spite of having been in contact with the *barrios* for nearly 20 years, each new chance of meeting people and talking with them is an exciting experience of learning and interaction. This is not to romanticise *barrio* residents, but most of the people I found in those areas have been especially kind, interesting and thoughtful. Listening to the residents was crucial to this research; it was a learning experience on how to connect with the space and with others, and it was also a delightful and entertaining activity. Popular settlements are very much about the people, and what they have done for their built environment and wellbeing. Poverty and struggle are part of the picture, and it is something that needs to be tackled more responsibly and successfully on the part of governmental bodies, but *barrios* are also full of possibilities and achievements: they especially involve people willing to take responsibilities for their own environments and lives. If they could have more resources and support, the achievements would be even greater and the people's struggle would be less.

Following Robinson (2006), these settlements should be seen as ordinary in order to avoid being labelled as different from others and marginalised. However, as has been argued from the introductory chapter, I firmly believe that these are extraordinary places, with truly unique people, and with exceptional architectural and urban characteristics from which much can be learned.

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Appendix 1:

Guidelines for semi-structured interviews with key community actors. (in Spanish)

1. Datos personales y familiares

- Nombre, edad, genero, estado civil, origen (hace cuanto vive en Bogotá), educación
- Datos familiares: nombres, edades, genero, relación
- Economía familiar: trabajo, ingresos
- Salud y educación familiar
- Recreación y cultura familiar (tiempo libre)
- Religión y costumbres
- Asociaciones a las que pertenece
- Sueños, expectativas, preocupaciones
- Relación con vecinos

2. El espacio público: Proceso

- Domicilio, hace cuanto vive allí, antes donde vivía, se piensa mudar en el futuro?
- Historia del espacio público
- Participó/participa usted en esa historia? (gestión, construcción, mantenimiento)
- Rol de la comunidad en la gestión/construcción del espacio público. Participación de la JAC y/o otros grupos en el proceso
- Rol del gobierno en la gestión/construcción del espacio público
- Problemas y ventajas del proceso
- Que hace falta por hacer

3. El espacio público: Uso y percepción

- Como usa el espacio público en semana, noche, los sábados y los domingos. Y su familia?
- Cuando piensa en el espacio público, que piensa? (para reunirse, para que los niños jueguen, para ir de compras, etc)
- Relación con la vivienda/negocio (sketches), que tan impotente seria vivir cerca/lejos del espacio público?
- Como es la seguridad
- Problemas del espacio público
- Conflictos en el espacio público entre distintos grupos/individuos del mismo barrio y/o con otros barrios o el gobierno

4. El espacio público: Producto y significado

- Qué opinión le merece el espacio público, como se podría mejorar?
- Debería tener más árboles? jardines? juegos?, bancas? luces?
- Le colocaría más/menos color? Porque si/no?
- Cuáles son los problemas del espacio público
- Se identifican los extraños?, como? Porque?
- Se siente identificada con el espacio público? Piensa que la mayoría de la comunidad también?
- Le gusta el espacio público, que le cambiaria para mejorarlo?
- Como imagina el espacio público en 10 años?
- Puede comentar sobre las fotos que se le presentan?

5. Conclusiones, algo más para agregar?

Appendix 2:

List of semi-structured interviews with key community actors.[42]

Danubio

1. José Eduardo Rubio (key actor in the development of the park)
2. Lucy Estrada Motoya (Jose's wife)
3. Rosa Orduña ('*tienda*' in front of the park)
4. Jorge Segura (Rosa's husband)
5. Arturo Fonseca (JAC president)

Los Cerezos

6. Tito López (*barrio* founder, JAC's treasurer)
7. Luis Emilio Garzón (*barrio* founder, house faces the park)
8. Saúl Castañeda (JAC president)
9. Doña María (lives in front of the park)

Villa Sonia

10. Lucy Acuña ('*tienda's*' owner)
11. Cesar Aguilar (Lucy's husband, JAC's treasurer)
12. Idelfonso Sánchez (JAC president)
13. Fabiola Mesa (corner's '*tienda*' in front of the park)

Andrea

14. Martha Yaneth Castro (JAC president)
15. Luis Murcia (former JAC president, largely responsibile for '*the ocho'* park)
16. Enrique López (*barrio* founder, lives in front of '*the ocho'* park)
17. Luis Escamilla (*barrio* founder, lives in front of '*the ocho'* park)
18. Gloria Capera (20 years in the *barrio*, former JAC member)
19. Consuelo Delgado (16 years in the *barrio*, owns a 'tienda')
20. Irma González (15 years in the *barrio*)

Nueva Argentina

21. Marco Fidel Suarez (JAC president)
22. Gilberto Salazar (owns the corner's bakery)
23. Ligia Casas (runs the '*comedor comunitario'*)

[42] Real names have been used with the interviewees' permission.

Aguas Claras

24. Lidia Garzón (JAC president)
25. Rocío García (resident)
26. María Pinzón (*barrio* founder, Rocio's mother)
27. Don Esteban (owns the '*tienda*' in front of the bus stop)

Tanque laguna

28. Carmen Fernández, community leader. With her leadership the park of the *barrio* was defended, built and upgraded.

Patio Bonito

29. Yolanda Mur, community leader whose work is specially focussed to defend open spaces of popular settlements.

Appendix 3:

Guidelines for unstructured discussions with residents. (in Spanish)

1. Identificación (si es posible)

2. El espacio público: Proceso

- Que sabe de la historia del espacio público, como se hizo?
- Participo/participa usted en esa historia? (gestión, construcción, mantenimiento)
- Que hace falta por hacer?

3. El espacio público: Uso y percepción

- Como usa el espacio público en semana, noche, los sábados y los domingos. Y su familia?
- Cuando piensa en el espacio público, que piensa? (para reunirse, para que los niños jueguen, para ir de compras, etc.)
- Problemas del espacio público
- Conflictos en el espacio público entre distintos grupos/individuos del mismo barrio y/o con otros barrios o el gobierno

4. El espacio público: Producto y significado

- Qué opinión le merece el espacio público, como se podría mejorar?
- Debería tener más árboles? Jardines? juegos?, bancas? luces?
- Le colocaría más/menos color? Porque si/no?
- Se siente identificada con el espacio público? Piensa que la mayoría de la comunidad también?

5. Conclusiones, algo mas para agregar?

Appendix 4:

List of unstructured interviews with key municipality officials and academics.[43]

Municipality:

- Secretaria del Habitat: Luis Alberto Quintero. Responsible for inter-institutional coordination
- IDRD (Instituto Distrital para la Recreación y el Deporte): Norman Díaz. Member of the staff
- Secretaria de Gobierno, Programa Fortalecimiento de Zonas Criticas: Ines Esteban. Programme Coordinator
- Caja de la Vivienda Popular: Jaqueline Niño. Responsible for the *Barrio* Upgrading programme
- IDPAC (Instituto Distrital de Participación y Acción Comunal): Sonia Murcia. OPC (Obras con Participación Ciudadana) programme coordinator
- Defensoría del Espacio Público: Alvaro Randazzo. Director and Clara Hinestroza. Programme coordinator
- IDU (Instituto de Desarrollo Urbano): Gabriel Talero. Member of the staff

Academia and NGOs:

- NGO 'Corporación Raíces' and Universidad Nacional: Jairo Chaparro.
- NGO 'Barrio Taller' and Universidad Javeriana: Hernando Carvajalino.
- Universidad de los Andes: Clemencia Escallon.

[43] Real names have been used with the interviewees' permission.

Appendix 5:

Dates of observations and mapping exercises. (November and December 2008)

El Danubio

1. Saturday, November 22, 7.00pm
2. Saturday, November 29, 12.30m
3. Saturday, December 13, 4.00pm
4. Wednesday, December 17, 4.00pm
5. Friday, December 19, 11.30am

Los Cerezos

6. Sunday, November 30, 1.00pm
7. Wednesday, December 10, 9.00am
8. Wednesday, December 10, 3.00pm
9. Saturday, December 13, 11.50am
10. Friday, December 19, 4.00pm

Villa Sonia

11. Sunday, November 23, 11.50am
12. Tuesday, December 2, 8.00am
13. Tuesday, December 2, 4.30pm
14. Thursday, December 4, 4.00pm
15. Saturday, December 20, 12.30m

La Andrea

Sector 1

16. Saturday, November 22, 11.00am
17. Saturday, November 29, 3.30pm
18. Tuesday, December 2, 11.30am
19. Saturday, December 20, 5.00pm.

Sector 2

20. Saturday, November 22, 12m
21. Tuesday, December 2, 12.30pm
22. Thursday, December 11, 3.00pm

Sector 3

23. Saturday, November 22, 3.00pm
24. Saturday, November 29, 3.00pm
25. Tuesday, December 2, 10.30am
26. Thursday, December 11, 4.30pm
27. Saturday, December 20, 5.30pm

Nueva Argentina

28. Saturday, November 22, 8.00am
29. Sunday, November 30, 10.00am
30. Wednesday, December 10, 1.00pm
31. Wednesday, December 10, 7.00pm
32. Saturday, December 13, 12.40m
33. Friday, December 19, 8.00am
34. Friday, December 19, 2.00pm

Aguas Claras

35. Wednesday, November 26, 2.00pm
36. Tuesday, December 9, 11am
37. Friday, December 12, 4.00pm
38. Saturday, December 13, 6:00pm
39. Sunday, December 21, 11.00am

Brasilia (case 23)

40. Saturday, November 22, 4.00pm
41. Saturday, November 29, 2.30pm
42. Tuesday, December 2, 2.00pm
43. Saturday, December 20, 4.30pm
44. Sunday, December 21, 4.00pm

Guacamayas stairs (case 46)

45. Sunday, November 23, 2.00pm

Estrella del Sur park: 'La Conexión' (case 53)

46. Saturday, November 15, 9.00am

Bello Horizonte street and stairs: 'Calle de la Union' (case 47)

47. Sunday, November 23, 4.00pm

Nueva Argentina II park (case 50)

48. Saturday, November 15, 11.00am

Libano pedestrian street: 'Alameda Tercer Milenio' (case 29)

49. Saturday, November 15, 3.00pm

Olivares park (case 30)

50. Sunday, November 16, 10.00am

Tanque Laguna park (case 54

51. Saturday, November 15, 5.00pm

Chuniza park (case 25)

52. Sunday, November 16, 2.00pm

Bellavista park (case 19)

53. Sunday, November 16, 4.00pm

Appendix 6:

List of maps and aerial photographs consulted

- Map of Bogotá, 1:50.000, 1992. Catastro Distrital.
- Map of Danubio's *barrio*, 2004. Catastro Distrital.
- Map of Manuela Beltran's *barrio* (Los Cerezos park), 2004. Catastro Distrital.
- Map of some areas of Ciudad Bolivar and Usme, 2007. Catastro Distrital.
- Guía de nomenclatura urbana, 2007. Catastro Distrital.
- Digital map of Bogotá (PDF), 2007.
- Digital map of Bogotá (Voloview), 2007.
- Digital aerial photo selected cases in Ciudad Bolivar and Usme, 1980.
- Digital aerial photo selected cases in Ciudad Bolivar and Usme, 1990.
- Digital aerial photo selected cases in Ciudad Bolivar and Usme, 2000.
- Digital aerial photo selected case in Bosa, 1980.
- Digital aerial photo selected case in Bosa, 1990.
- Digital aerial photo selected case in Bosa, 2000.
- Digital aerial photo Aguas Claras, 2000.
- Digital aerial photo La Andrea, 2000.